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PlayStation®

The Official Magazine

Issue 059 June 2012

DUST 514
PS3 and PC gamers unite to fight

Vita's NEXT **22** GAMES

REVIEWED
- Disgaea 3: Absence of Detention
- Yakuza: Dead Souls
- I Am Alive
- Deadliest Warrior: Ancient Combat

PlayStation - The Official Magazine Issue 59 (June 2012)

870 GAJILLION GUNS!

BORDERLANDS 2

FPS meets RPG meets your next shooter addiction

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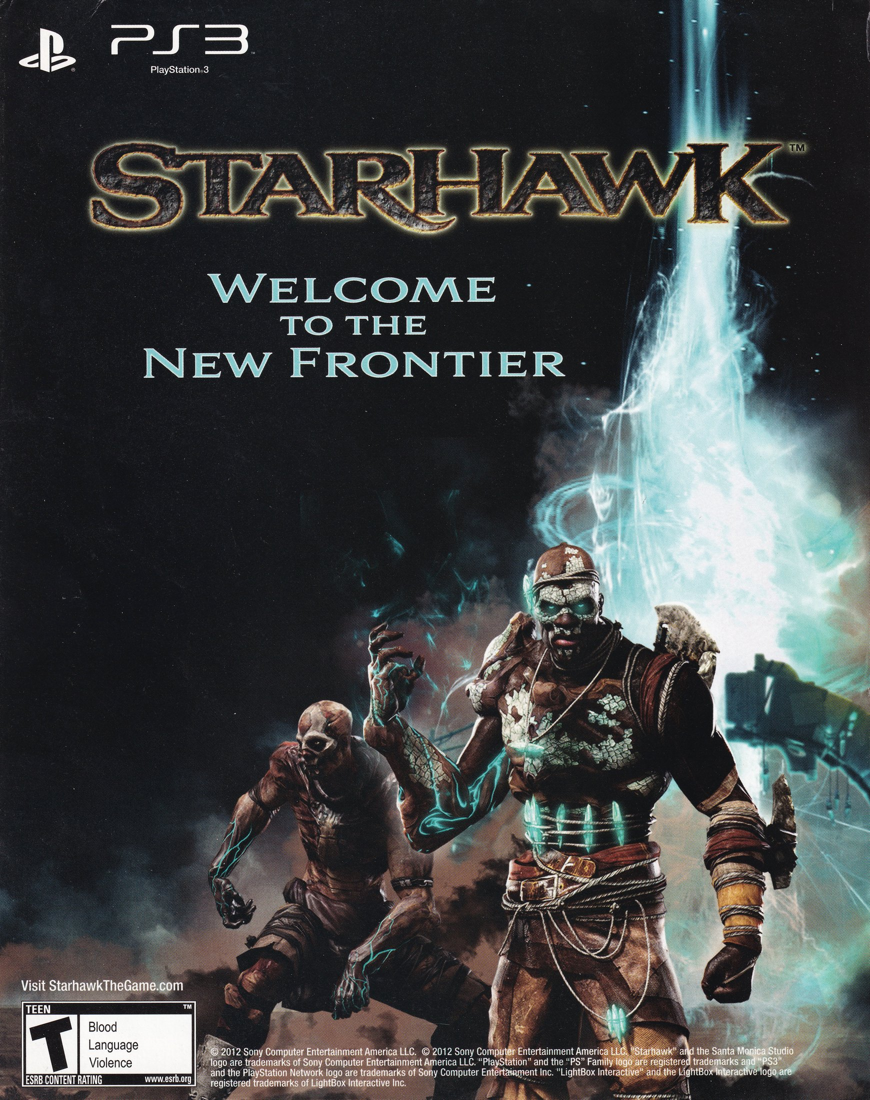
LOST PLANET 3 **SPIDER-MAN** EPIC MICKEY 2 **DISHONORED**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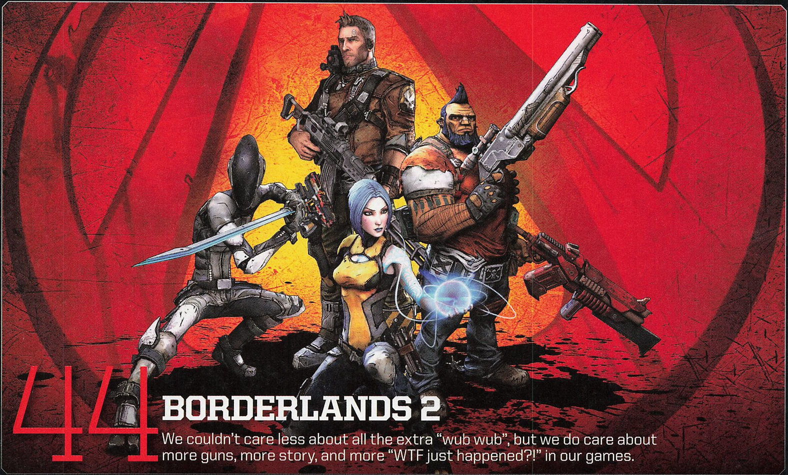
COVER FEATURE



44 BORDERLANDS 2

We couldn't care less about all the extra "wub wub", but we do care about more guns, more story, and more "WTF just happened?!" in our games.

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DUST 514

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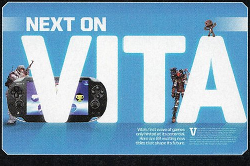
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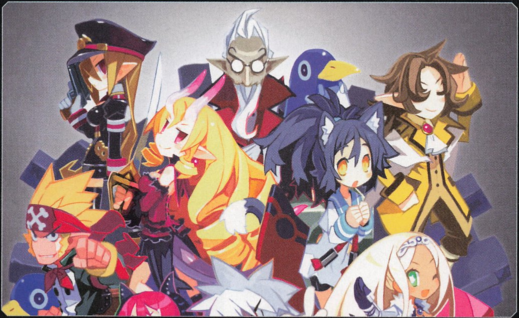
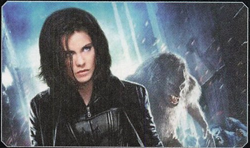


76 **DISGAEA 3: ABSENCE OF DETENTION**
School is back in session and the students of Evil Academy are still up to no good. Will new scenarios, class skills, and leaderboards see the Vita version rise above the PS3 original?



84 **BADASS WOMEN**
Our Blu-ray section and our Video Download spotlight on p.93 feature ladies to die for.

A Shot at Redemption

The shooter genre shows signs of innovation

As much as I love shooters, it's easy to become jaded with the over-saturated genre. There are days when I can't help griping, "Oh god. Not *another* combat shooter!" And as much as *Call of Duty* and *Battlefield* fanboys might argue otherwise, there's not a whole lot of difference between the two franchises in the grand overall scheme of gaming. Innovation within the genre has seemingly suffered a headshot and been thoroughly teabagged.

Which is why I am genuinely excited by the two shooters we chose to cover in our features section this month. *Borderlands 2*, our cover feature game, blends traditional first-person shooter gameplay with roleplaying game elements and presents it in a gorgeous cel-shaded wrapping. Yes, the first *Borderlands* game also took the hybrid gameplay approach, but developer Gearbox seems to be ratcheting up the sequel's quality and execution across the board. It's suddenly transitioning from "promising follow-up" to possible Game of the Year contender in my mind.

Our other featured shooter, *DUST 514*, is so ambitious in scope and nature that my brain has difficulty comprehending it. It's a free-to-play download game that will allow PS3 gamers to enter and participate in the PC MMO universe of *EVE Online*. For those unfamiliar with *EVE*, the persistent virtual world has thrived for nearly a decade and the machinations of its members' in-game corporations are the stuff of gaming legend. The idea that PlayStation gamers will become active combat participants (or pawns?) within the MMO's ecosystem is simply a fascinating prospect—one I can't wait to experience for myself this summer.

Of course, there will still be no shortage of the usual shooter suspects (and the bevy of knockoffs) in the coming months, but it's heartening that the genre is evolving at last.

Roger Burchill
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Ken Bousquet
Art Director
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We heard a rumor that Ken Bousquet used to dream. We know he doesn't dream anymore though because dreaming requires sleep, and Ken never sleeps. Ever.

Scott Butterworth
Senior Editor
twitter.com/ScottPTOM

Scott Butterworth used to dream about being an astronaut. Then when he became one, he realized after the stars there are just more stars. Now he writes about games.

Mystery Dude
Executive Editor
twitter.com/ [TBD]

Ryan's all grown up and moved on to our sister mag @Gamer. Now the question is: who will be PTOM's new staff editor? Be sure to tune in next month to find out!

Anne Lewis
Assistant Editor
twitter.com/BDRAnneLewis

Anne Lewis tried out for *Project Runway* a few seasons back and was turned down. Apparently Hammer pants aren't considered fashionable anymore, despite her best efforts.

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The PlayStation Entertainment Plan

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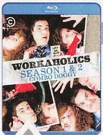
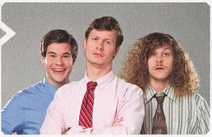
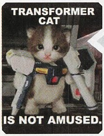




JUNE 02

Free Press Summer Fest
Head to Houston, Texas, for the fourth annual Free Press Music Fest to see a variety of artists like Willie Nelson, Snoop Dogg, and The Flaming Lips.



04

Here Kitty Kitty
Today is Hug Your Cat Day, but if we have learned anything from our feline companions, it's that they hate hugs. They prefer handshakes and gentlemanly nods.

05

Work it Out
"Workaholics" is exactly what working in an office setting with friends is really like, except not at all. Seasons 1 and 2 are out on Blu-ray.
In Stores:
Inversion, Madagascar 3

ELECTRONIC ENTERTAINMENT EXPO E3

07

E3 2012 6/5-6/7
E3 is here, which means we're not. Please enjoy this robot-generated entry: 01101111 01100010 01100101 01111001 00100000 01110101 01110011.

08

World Brain Tumor Day
We didn't know this existed, but we're going to spend the day reading Internet forum comments to celebrate.

09

Laffy Taffy
Natalie Portman is now very famous, but we like to remember the birthday girl for when we first saw her: Taffy Dale in *Mars Attacks!* [Um, hello, Anne? Ever heard of *The Professional*?!]

This coupon entitles you to
ONE FREE HUG
Redeemable anytime

11

Hug-a-Palooza
Hugging people we don't know isn't usually encouraged, but today is a Hug Holiday so screw the accepted rules of social interaction and hug a stranger!

12

Cheerbleeder
Fact: Few things in life are better than a cheerleader killing zombies with chainsaws.
In Stores:
Lollipop Chainsaw

San Romero KNIGHTS

Abraham Lincoln
VAMPIRE HUNTER

17

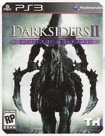
Get Off the Phone, A-hole!
The first mobile phone call was made on this day in 1946—followed shortly after by the first phone-caused auto accident.

19

Anne's Birthday
Anne is one year closer to her inevitable death. We think sharks will be involved...and dynamite.
In Stores:
LEGO Batman 2, Gravity Rush (Vita)

22

Good Ol' Abe
WHAT? How did we not know a movie called *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter* was coming out until just now? This is unacceptable. We're going to see it immediately.



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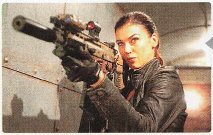
Deadly Fun
Darksiders II is in stores now and it's Death's turn to step up and do what he does best.
In Stores:
Amazing Spider-Man, Spec Ops: The Line, LittleBigPlanet (Vita)



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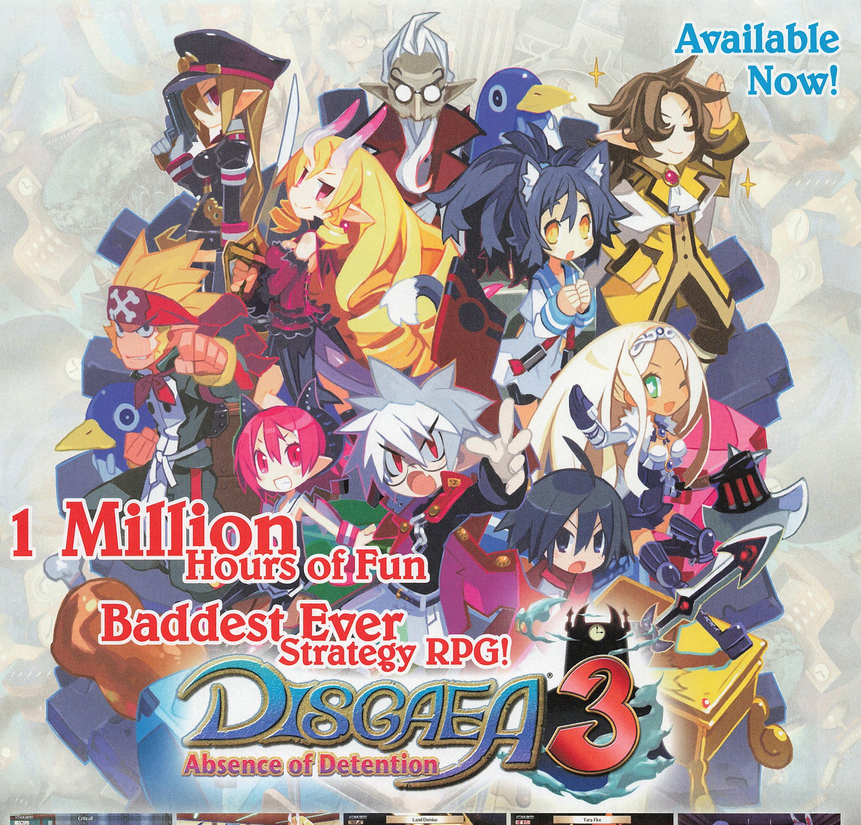
Real American Heroes
We all know there's only one reason to go see *G.I. Joe: Retaliation* and it's not The Rock. Hi, Adrianne!

30

Roger's Birthday
Our illustrious leader does not require birthday gifts, but if we require a happy work environment then we had best find him some.

* Release dates are subject to change by the publishers.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Did you say no...?
Saying no to your only friend!?

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ATTACK ENTRY
Land Demise
TOTAL DAMAGE 0

Insane Customizability
Create unique characters with new, job-specific Special Skills!

ATTACK ENTRY
Tera Fire
TOTAL DAMAGE 0

Now With More Power
The new Tera-level spells feature character cameos drawn by guest artists, as well as more damage!

Fuka Kazamatsuri

Ah, the best school in the netherworld, the Nether Institute, Evil Academy.

Fight New Bosses
What are Fuka & Desco doing here!?

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power to the players

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Mild Language
Mild Suggestive Themes

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The Big 10

Stories everyone's talking about

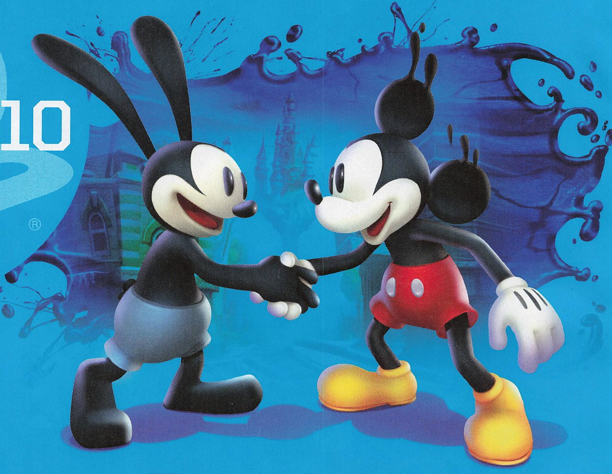
Ice Bound
Dig out your thermal undies, Capcom confirms *Lost Planet 3*.
▸▸Page 10

PS3 Power
Whoa on the next-gen. There's still plenty of kick in the ol' girl.
▸▸Page 14

Multi-Max
Max Payne 3 takes its bullet-time madness to multiplayer.
▸▸Page 16

Drive Time
LittleBigPlanet Karting?! What was *ModNation Racers* then?
▸▸Page 22

The Great Debate
PTOM eds kick around the pros and cons of Kickstarters.
▸▸Page 24



1

Brush with greatness

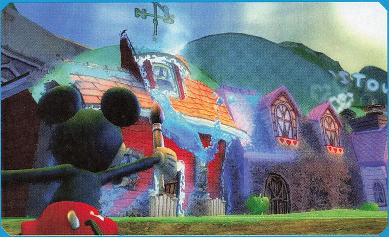
The next installment in Disney's captivating *Epic Mickey* franchise is heading to PS3

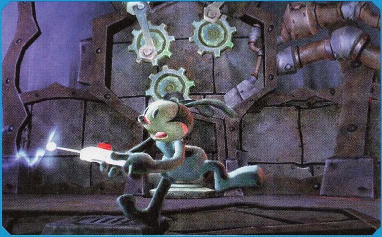
Think you're too old to play a game starring Mickey Mouse? Well... You're wrong. At least, according to renowned game designer Warren Spector, who revealed that over half of the people who played his Wii-exclusive *Epic Mickey* were between the ages of 18 and 34. But it's not like saying Mickey's got "staying power" is going out on a limb. We're talking about a character who's about to celebrate his 85th birthday, so a game celebrating his entire legacy, as well as the history of a company he helped solidify, has a multi-generational appeal.

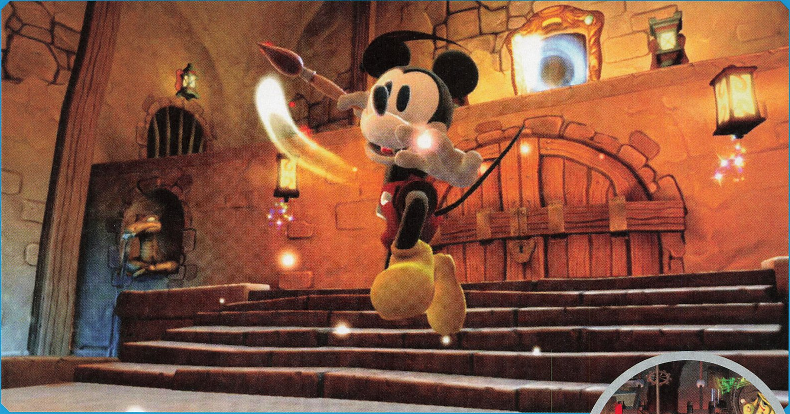
While it's unfortunate that PlayStation gamers didn't get a crack at the original *Epic Mickey* (although that's something Spector hopes will be rectified via PSN in the future), the big news is that *Epic Mickey 2: The Power of Two* will come to PS3 on October 1, 2012. We'll also benefit from the lessons learned from the franchise's first entry: the inability to play via a traditional controller was a prime complaint of Wii players. So not only will PlayStation folk get to see *Epic Mickey* in high definition for the first time, but PS3 is the only platform that'll offer the choice between playing with a traditional or motion controller via PlayStation Move.

We won't deny the comfort offered by hammering out commands with a traditional analog stick and button configuration, but Move support is crucial here as *Epic Mickey* can lay claim to one of the most meaningful implementations of motion control to date. Mickey's trapped in a world of cartoon misfits and armed with the power of restorative paint and/or life-removing paint thinner. Strafing around while pointing the wand to hose down environments remains incredibly intuitive.

"Playstyle matters" is a mantra developer Junction Point throws around a lot in regards to *Epic Mickey*, and it's one that's by no means restricted to control options. In an animated world, Mickey's paint-tastic abilities basically







Oswald Who?

In a bit of very real and bizarre history, Walt Disney lost the rights to his first popular creation, Oswald the Lucky Rabbit, before going on to form his own company and Mickey Mouse in 1928. Thanks to a wacky 2006 deal that traded sportscaster Al Michaels back to Universal, Oswald returned to reunite with his long-lost brother in *Epic Mickey*.

break down to the power to give, and the power to take away. Anyone familiar with Spector's pedigree (*Thief, Deus Ex*) knows he loves asking players to make game-altering, morally ambiguous decisions, and *Epic Mickey 2* is no exception. Adding or removing life will result in unforeseen, sometimes drastic, consequences down the line. For instance, thinning, or removing, pieces of the environment can be the quickest way to solve a platforming puzzle, but how will townsfolk act toward Mickey when he's destroying their homes later on in the game? We don't know, and that's what makes *Epic Mickey 2* exciting: it presents a variety of outcomes so that playthroughs will never be exactly the same.

Better yet, Mickey's sibling Oswald steps into a meatier, playable role this time around. He's not only given the power to affect electrical objects in unique ways throughout the game, he can combine his talents with Mickey's to boost the two to otherwise unreachable heights via team maneuvers—such as aiding in giant jumps and using his ears like helicopter blades for additional hovering. Oswald will be by Mickey's side throughout the game, and a second player can take control of him at any point thanks to the drop-in/drop-out splitscreen co-op ability.

In addition to being a colossal and unrepentant celebration of the Disney legacy, *Epic Mickey 2* marks a return to the classic 3D platforming of games like *Jak and Daxter* and *Sly Cooper*, with an added layer of modern decision-making depth. So expect it to be much more than a "kids game."

2

Fire and ice

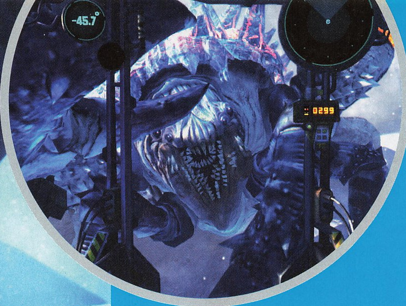
Capcom steers Lost Planet 3 back to its snowy roots for a story-driven, horror-infused prequel

Hell has once again frozen over. The lush jungles and sprawling deserts of *Lost Planet 2*? Totally gone, buried under centuries of perpetual snow and ice. Instead of sticking with its sunny, co-op–focused approach, developer Spark has decided to once again focus on what the series does best: giant fighting robots, crazy inhospitable environments, and character-driven survival stories.

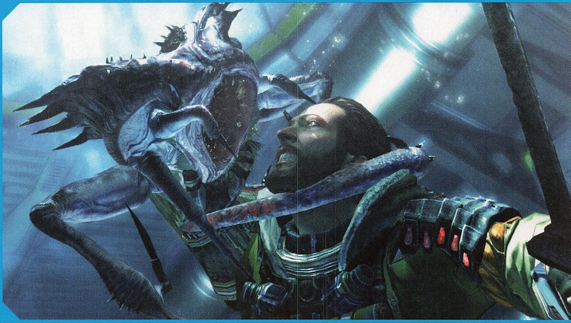
To that end, *Lost Planet 3* introduces a brand-new hero: deep space everyman Jim Peyton, a blue-collar husband and father who's traveled to the recently colonized world of E.D.N. III in search of a little hazard pay. Armed with his trusty "rig"—a mind-bogglingly large mech equipped with a drill arm and a grabbing claw—Jim sets out to tackle construction jobs in the face of relentless blizzards and unwelcoming alien creatures called Akrid. As he'll quickly discover, however, the frozen environs of E.D.N. III hold many mysterious secrets and hidden dangers.

Rigged for Survival

Our demo opened with Jim asleep in his rig, his warm breath visibly hanging in the frigid air. After a rude awakening and a quick journey through the awe-inspiring ice-cave hangar that serves as the game's central hub (complete with side missions and optional character interactions), Jim embarked on his first mission. Though the game's on-foot shooter sections adhere to the series' usual third-person view, the camera automatically switches to first-person within the cockpit of



The focus is on what the series does best: giant robots, inhospitable environments, and character-driven survival stories



any mech, with massive robot arms protruding from the bottom of the screen and the rig's industrial control panel blinking just off to the right.

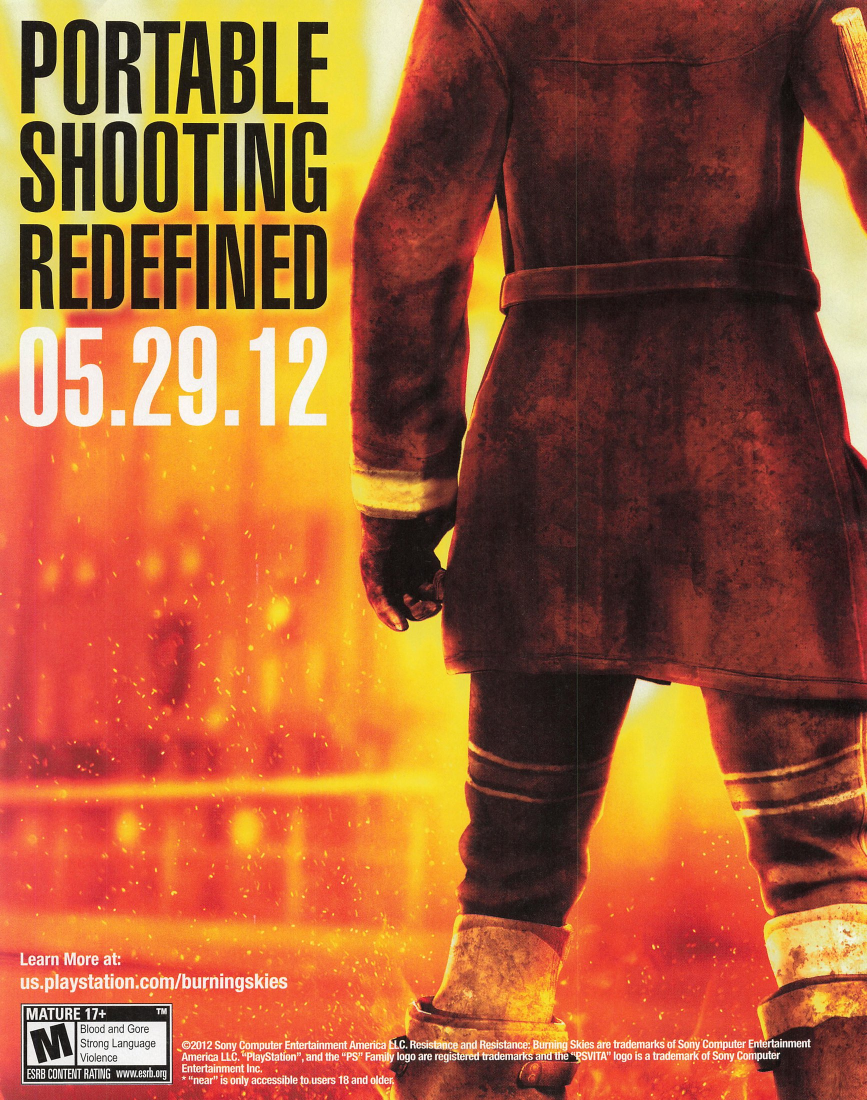
This perspective not only enhances the mech's sense of scale and weight (it is, in fact, the largest robot in *Lost Planet* history), but also allows for some spectacular views. As Jim's rig emerged from the hangar, we were treated to a brilliant sunset burning just above a combination blizzard and lightning storm that quickly engulfed the jagged ice peaks below. The scene was beautiful but distinctly alien, and the storms themselves will be a constant factor in the game, according to the developers.

From there Jim began to trudge slowly toward his objective while listening to a sentimental audio log from his wife, a saccharine scene that was quickly interrupted by a sudden ice wave. Since Jim had to get out and de-ice the rig manually while fending off a small pack of wolf-like Akrid, we got our first taste of the game's third-person shooting. Jim's movements felt weighty and substantial, but he can evade and roll simply by tapping the X button. The down-sight aiming mechanic seemed standard but solid, and the damage, as expected, was on the arcadey side. The brand-new heads-up display actually evoked aspects of *Dead Space*, with Jim's regenerating health displayed on his body and his mini-map projected out in front of him. And while we only saw it once, the series' trademark grappling hook does indeed return.

Cold Hard Truths

Eventually Jim made his way to a hotspot of "T-energy"—the classic *Lost Planet* resource that powers E.D.N. III—where he plants his energy-harvesting device, thaws the surrounding area, and makes a deeply disturbing discovery: an abandoned base. Since Jim had always been told his group was the first to ever colonize E.D.N. III, it's a place that should not exist. As he ventured inside, the game turned full-on survival horror: eerie noises punctuated a subtle, haunting soundtrack as ominous lights flickered against the sterile panels of every desolate hallway. The entire scene felt, once again, like a page from *Dead Space's* playbook.

While Jim made it through the base entirely unscathed, this section did provide a brief glimpse into *Lost Planet 3's* new direction, as well as a welcome segue into a massive mech-on-monster-crab boss battle. According to series creator Kenji Oguro, this more focused experience is the "closest to the original idea for the series" of any *Lost Planet* game so far. Unfortunately, we'll have to wait until early 2013 to discover E.D.N. III's dark secrets firsthand.



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* "near" is only accessible to users 18 and older.

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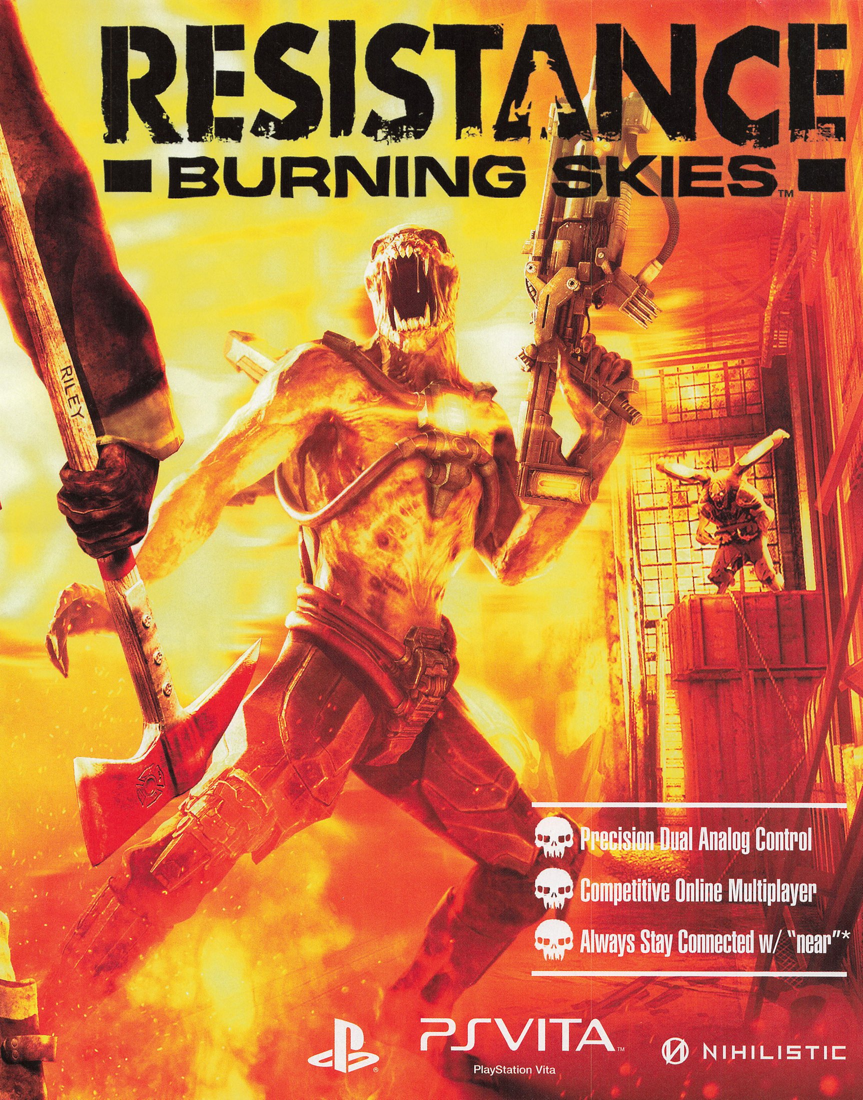

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NIHILISTIC

Quantic Dream's new demo, Kara, is astonishing—and suggests its next game will be like nothing ever seen on PlayStation.

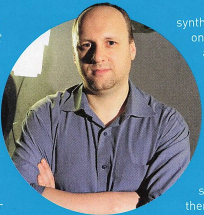
3

The PS3 game that changes everything

David Cage on where Quantic Dream goes after Heavy Rain and Kara

We'll admit it. There's a good chance we *might* have fallen for the captivating, heartbreaking new First Lady of PS3. Unveiled during the Game Developers Conference in San Francisco, *Heavy Rain* visionary David Cage's latest creation made hearts flutter and eyes run over seven incredible minutes. Kara, darling... will you do us the honor of being our new XMB avatar?

Don't get too attached, though. The footage, which shows our synthetic heroine being assembled on a futuristic production line, is a tech demo. We can say with confidence that Kara won't be made into a full PS3 game. But turn that frown upside down, because the real game Quantic Dream is working on promises to offer even more. *Much* more.



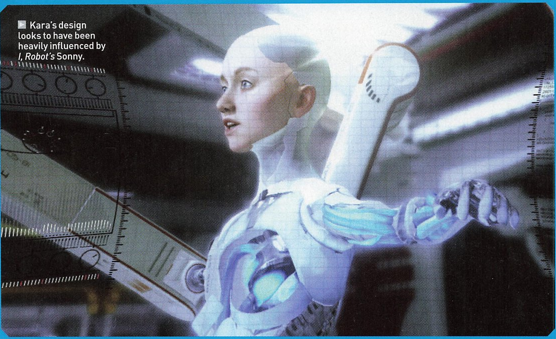
Cage is trying to break storytelling boundaries on PS3.

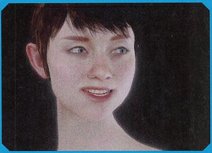
"Kara was made a year ago, so the tech has evolved a lot since then," admits Cage. "It'd look much better if we'd done it now. The engineering has improved significantly over the last year. Whatever the next game is, it's going to look considerably prettier than Kara." Don't worry, gorgeous cyborg lady. We still love you.

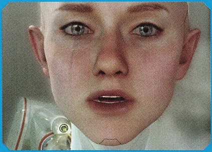
Robot Phwoars

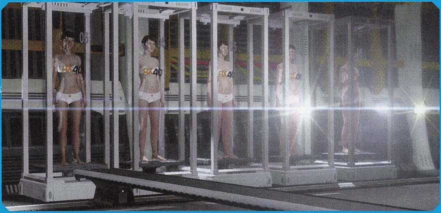
What the demo also proves is there's plenty of life left in the PS3. And when we consider Quantic Dream's next offering will rock more advanced graphics than Kara, it's a strong statement from Sony in the face of the rumored announcement of the next Xbox at this year's E3.

Although the French studio's next full-scale PS3 project might end up


Kara's design looks to have been heavily influenced by *I, Robot's* Sonny.




Kara owns the teariest peepers since Madison.


Boom lighting! It's no "sun through the trees" in *Gran Turismo 3*. Still, nicely duplicated android pants.

being more glam than GDC's *I, Robot*-esque mini-movie, it won't necessarily pack a heavier emotional haymaker. The footage trumps most current story-driven games for affecting impact over a 14th of the duration of a Kojima cutscene. How can your tear ducts *not* have a flood-tastic whammy put on them after hearing the off-screen operator threaten to dismantle Kara?

Her subsequent speech where she begs for her life poses the uncomfortable question of what it means to truly be alive, something raised by Ridley Scott's seminal sci-fi *Blade Runner*. Cage elaborates: "The main theme of the piece is what being human means. It's about seeing this character being born in front of you, how she feels and how it resonates with you as a human being." Ah, pesky feelings. Judging by Kara's world, they're a giant no-no in the land of house-tidying sexbots.

It's this desire to convey emotion that has Cage striving to break motion-capture boundaries: "If you spoke to Hollywood actors about it five years ago, they'd ask what you were talking about. But since *Avatar*, it's become respectable work." Certainly, Valorie Curry's performance (the *CSI: New York* actress who brings Kara to such mesmerizing life) is motorways ahead of the "sacre bleu, come quick mon Américain papa, my broother is droowning" territory seen with *Heavy Rain's* Gallic-sounding Yankee tykes.

Acting Up

"Everything is in the script and the performance of the actress," says Cage of Curry's role. "We learned the importance of working with actors—of rehearsing all the things that went through body language. When you start playing with full performance capture, there's a lot you can say without words. It's like discovering a new area that we had totally ignored, and it gives [us] a lot of subtlety and nuance that weren't available in games before." This level of subtlety bests even the elastic-faced realism of *L.A. Noire*.

All of which bodes brilliantly for Quantic Dream's next game, which we expect to be announced at this year's E3. In the meantime we can confirm the French studio is utilizing British tech. The new engine uses a UK-based company called Autodesk, which has created a programme called Mudbox for digital sculpting—most likely for super-lifelike character models.

It's also worth being aware that Sony Europe filed a trademark for the term Infraworld. This was a Quantic Dream project that was previously cancelled, although tantalizingly a logo brandishing the name appeared in a poster in *Heavy Rain*.

Whatever the game turns out to be, it's certain to push PS3 in ways no dev has yet managed—including Naughty Dog. Expect it to mix the sophisticated choice and consequence system of *Heavy Rain* with Kara's incredible mo-cap. But regardless of how far it pushes the console, Cage says the success of his games comes back to creating interesting characters.

"Whether it's on PS3, 4, 5 or 6, the process of writing a good script and working with good actors won't change. In the future we'll have more polygons, but fundamentally, what we learn now will remain consistent." He even drops a tease regarding Sony's new handheld baby. "I think what we do would work very well on Vita." Whatever the format, Cage's next project promises to be special.

Bright Biotic Future

Ever wasted days wistfully dreaming about having your very own robot maid to, um...alphabetize your Blu-ray collection? Well, according to Cage, it's a reality that could be closer than you think. "It's going to happen one day. You'll have assistants instead of your laptop. You'll have Kara and she'll take your appointments and cook for you and she'll do... Y'know, whatever for you."

4 Bring the Payne

Max Payne 3 marks the series' first foray into multiplayer. We grill lead designer **Charlie Bewsher** on what to expect.

What are you doing to make this feel like a *Max Payne* multiplayer experience?

From the single-player we brought Max's signature Bullet Dodge move, and his signature power, which is Bullet Time, you can dual-wield... So those are sort of the gameplay elements, and then we're really trying to build on the strong narrative side of the single-player with the Gang Wars mode, which has a very strong, structured narrative to it.

Narrative? How does story factor into multiplayer?

The events of the story follow the events that happen after Max's beef in the Favela [in the single-player campaign]. All the gangs are fighting and trying to take control. If you, say, kill the assassination target, the narrative and the gameplay spin off into a different direction for everybody else and that happens all the time. As an individual, as well as just your score—you can have a huge impact on the way the game plays.

Anything else that's going to separate *Max* from the other third-person online shooters out there?

One of the things we tried to solve in *Max Payne* that we didn't like in other multiplayer shooters is the anonymity aspect. You go into a game, you don't know who anybody is, you don't have a relationship with anybody. We added a wide range of ways that we try to create relationships in the game. We have large public crews and small private crews that you can join. We have some in-game mechanics like Wages where you'll be betting on a particular person, or Vendettas where if someone kills you twice, you can have a Vendetta against them.

You mentioned Max's Bullet Time. Will players have access to any other abilities?

Bullet Time is a hard-boiled cop's special ability, but the multiplayer has a whole range of different characters in it so we wanted to create a whole range of "Bursts" that reflected the different sorts of characters and the different vibes and themes in multiplayer. We deal with concepts like conspiracy and betrayal. One of my favorites is the Paranoia Burst. All the Bursts have three levels. The first level of Paranoia makes your teammates look like an enemy to you on the mini-map and in the game. The second level turns on friendly fire for the enemy team. We also have a Weapon Double Dealer which nerfs all of the other team's weapons. Level three makes all their grenades fail—all their grenades drop off their belts and fall at their feet and start blinking.

What would you say to a fan who's skeptical about a *Max Payne* game containing multiplayer?

We let you be Max Payne in multiplayer. I think he is the baddest person in videogames, and we let you be that guy with your friends. I think that's all I need to say.

It's hard to imagine Max playing nice with anybody...even friends. That's just the sort of multiplayer experience we're looking for.

BRAVIA
Visual effect
Sepia
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0 : 00 : 06
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5

Thanks for the Memories

Edit photos and videos on PS3 with the PlayMemories Studio app

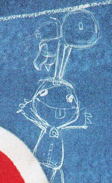
The console that does everything just got even more versatile. Sony has released a new PS3 application called PlayMemories Studio that allows you to manage and edit your photos and videos without the need for a PC/Mac to act as your media middleman. Simply connect camcorders, cameras, or even a PS Vita directly to the PS3 via its USB port, and the $15 software allows you to view pictures and videos on your big-sceen TV. Pictures can also be edited with visual effects and text and organized into slideshows, while videos can be edited with special features like slow motion, sound effects, and color filters.

After the editing work is complete, the media can be directly uploaded to Facebook. The entire process can also be performed through a Vita or PSP if the portable is linked via PS3's Remote Play function.

The PS3 app is the latest in Sony's PlayMemories Online cloud storage initiative, which gives users access to images and videos from a multitude of devices. While the PS3-specific application doesn't yet have access to PlayMemories Online, Sony says that's in the works.

PlayStation Plus subscribers and new purchasers of select Sony cameras and camcorders can receive the app for free, but there's a 30-day free trial available for everyone else if they'd like to try before they buy.

We're most excited by the possibility that this app could encourage more game developers to include screenshot and video capture functionality in their titles. Now that there's an easy way to edit and upload to social networking sites, it may finally be worth it for more developers to spend time putting these functions into their games. We eagerly await the day when we can bomb our friends' Facebook walls with gorgeous travelogue photos of our adventures in *Just Cause 2* and *Skyrim* without ever leaving the comfort of our family room couch.



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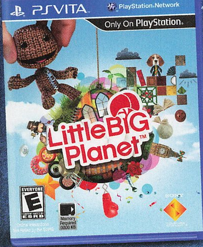

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6 Yosuke Hayashi

Ninja Gaiden 3's studio head talks Vita and the Japanese gaming resurgence

How have you found working with PS Vita?
Working with Vita for *Ninja Gaiden Sigma*, we only had about three months of development. It was done really quickly, but we found Vita pretty good hardware to work with. Translating a PS3 game to Vita is something that requires a lot of changes, but many of our developers said Sony have made the hardware a lot more developer friendly, so we were able to pull it off without a problem.

Given the competition, will Vita be a success?
I think Vita is good: it has some really good features that distinguish it from everything else. I think if developers put effort in and make games that use those functions—those unique functions—then it will be great. Vita will be defined by what is created for it. Games and game consoles are not necessities like a refrigerator or an oven; it's not like there needs to be one per household. I think that people who "get" Vita's uniqueness will really like the hardware, and it's this uniqueness that developers should really pinpoint.

Does great design come from a team or individual?
For us at Team Ninja it's definitely a team effort. We pick up the game and several of us sit down and think about it. We get our staff to put meat on top of the bones. There are a lot of people involved in that and it's a team effort. For us as developers we really want to work together and unify our strengths to give the player the best experience we can. In the past, with the old Team Ninja, it was more about the single vision of someone. This new Team Ninja is definitely a team effort. Team effort is definitely the best way to go.

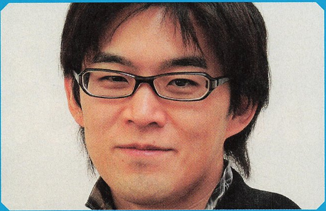
As a Japanese developer, how difficult is it to represent western things?
When we look at western locations and characters, we're not trying to simulate them—it's more our take on them. When we make a game like *Ninja Gaiden*, we don't want to focus on how we simulate a Japanese person or western person—it's not like that. We show our characters the way we want them to appear in the story. We look at the game, we make it from our perspective and from our abilities so we make sure that characters are portrayed in the game the way they should be portrayed in the game; not necessarily the way they really look like in real life, outside of Japan.

Has last year's tsunami had an effect on the Japanese game industry?
In recent years there has been this talk of western developers overtaking Japanese developers. The term "Japanese developers" usually has a negative vibe to it in the media.

But when this whole disaster happened, we understood in a deeper sense what the good things about Japan are. We take it for granted in our society, but we took another look at ourselves, and the media found out the great things about Japan: the harmony, the bond, the connection.

This is something we got inspired by, and we took another look at ourselves as a team. That kind of experience, that makes us take another look at ourselves, is something we've implemented into our games, and it's something that only the Japanese can do. For *Ninja Gaiden 3*, the whole concept of Japan and of a bond between characters is something that we looked at. Because everyone bonded together and stuck together through the disaster, we now feel like a big group supporting each other. In the past we had the attitude that: "Oh it's a superstar creating a game, it's a cool guys game." Now it's not that crap, it's just a team of people working hard to create a really good experience.

▼ Hayashi has worked at Team Ninja since 2007, his first title being PS3 exclusive *Ninja Gaiden Sigma*. Before *Ninja Gaiden 3* he worked on the Nintendo DS game *Dragon Sword*.



> "This new Team Ninja is definitely a team effort. Team effort is the way to go."

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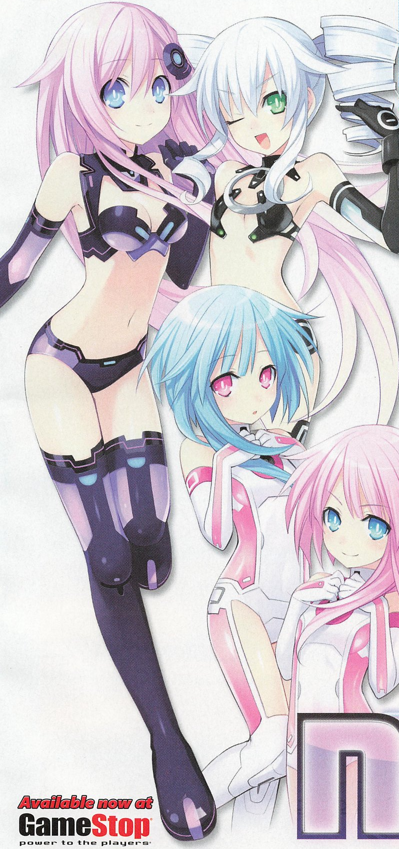

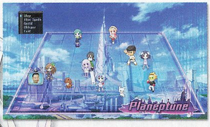

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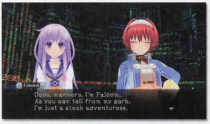
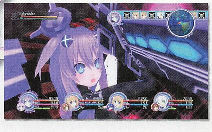


Falcom

Oops, manners. I'm Falcom. As you can tell from my garb. I'm just a stock adventuress.

MULTIPLE ENDINGS
Friendships made during the game affect your ending!



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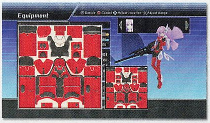
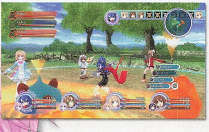


TEXTURE CUSTOMIZATION
Customize Nepgear's transformed version with your own image files!



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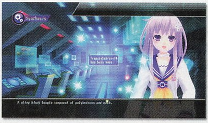

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7 LBP Karting screens are a giant win

First shots of Sackboy's debut racer promise rockets and riotous fun

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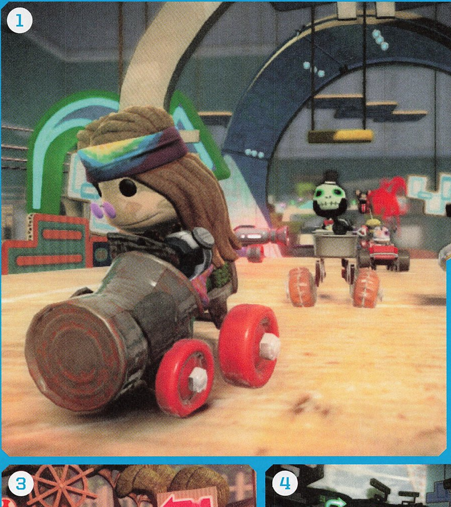

1 Personalization is still the name of the game, with *LBPK* offering up a range of old and new creation tools. **2** As well as track design, we can make our very own game rules—and then deign not to tell anyone. Ha! **3** Multiplayer includes arena battles, objective-based missions, and loads of minigames. **4** Not that any of us are very good at it, but levels can be easily shared. **5** This is a kart racer, but as only Media Molecule can do it. Rollerskating, anyone?

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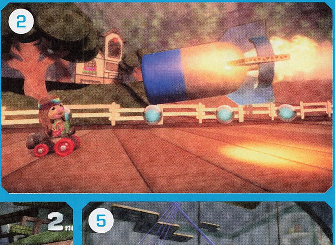

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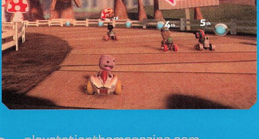

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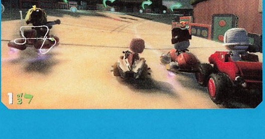

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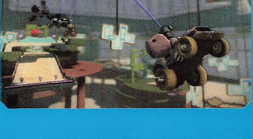
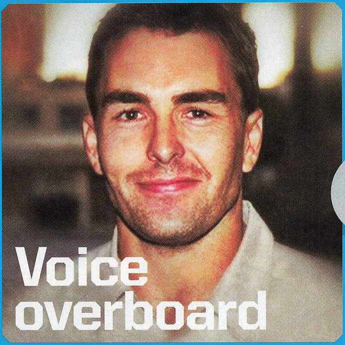




8

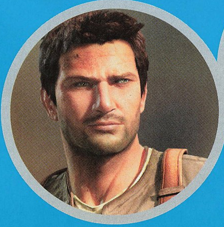
Voice overboard

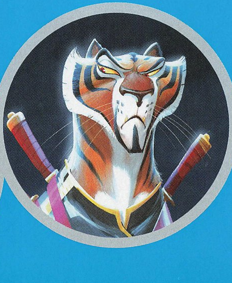
From suave adventurer to cartoon tiger, Nolan North's unlikely (and adorable) transformation

As gaming's most prolific voice actor, Nolan North has lent his talents to a surprising range of characters including *Uncharted's* Nathan Drake, *Batman's* Penguin, and, most recently, El Jefe, an angry, anthropomorphic tiger who serves as a boss character in the upcoming *Sly Cooper: Thieves in Time*. While evil tigers fall well within the scope of his abilities, we were surprised to hear about how he landed the role and how he chose to handle it.

"When we do the voice over, we write up a sheet with the character and the lines and send it out," explains *Thieves in Time* lead designer Mat Kraemer. "A bunch of people do the takes, and then we get them all back, put them in a directory with the character's name on it, and send it out to a bunch of team members. Then we sit down and talk about it and negotiate from there, but we don't know who [the actors] are or what kind of work they've done because we don't want it to sway a decision."

Thanks to the blind selection process, the developers at Sanzaru Games got both an ideal El Jefe and a pleasant surprise. "We were just like, 'We pick that one. He's got the best sounding voice.' Then [North] just showed up in the studio, and everyone was like, 'What are *you* doing here?'" exclaims Sanzaru president Glen Egan. The surprises didn't stop there, however: "The best part is, Nolan's son's name is Cooper. When [North] came in, he was so awesome because he came in with a stogie and this little hat on. He was already in character when he walked in the door! Then he was like [in a faux-Fidel Castro accent], 'I've been practicing these lines all morning. Cooper, make your bed! Cooper, it's time for breakfast!' It was great."





9

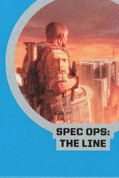
The Readers' Most Wanted

With only a bit of shifting the top of our list is mostly unchanged this month. We're still taking bets on *Black Ops 2* staying at the top until it's out and we might make it more interesting by saying *Grand Theft Auto V* will be there too. With some recent big game releases there was more room for new entries and both *NBA* titles jumped in to fill the slots. More movement on the list sees *Rainbow 6: Patriots* return, and *The Last of Us* at number 20?! Really, people?

RESIDENT EVIL 6

01 *Call of Duty: Black Ops 2*
02 *Grand Theft Auto V*
03 *Resident Evil 6*
04 *Assassin's Creed III*
05 *Madden NFL 13*
06 *DmC: Devil May Cry*
07 *NBA Live 13*
08 *BioShock Infinite*
09 *NBA 2K13*
10 *The Amazing Spider-Man*
11 *NHL 13*
12 *Tom Clancy's Rainbow 6: Patriots*
13 *Borderlands 2*
14 *Transformers: Fall of Cybertron*
15 *Darksiders II*
16 *Medal of Honor: Warfighter*
17 *Men in Black*
18 *Spec Ops: The Line*
19 *Star Trek: The Game*
20 *The Last of Us*

BIOSHOCK INFINITE



SPEC OPS: THE LINE

Stats in this chart appear courtesy of Ipsos OTX MediaCT's GamePlan Insights. All games are PS3 titles. Polling period was March 18, 2012 to March 31, 2012.

10 Are Kickstarter campaigns good for gaming?

PTOM eds analyze videogame development investment strategies. Wee!

Yes

Says the positive investor
Anne Lewis

I check Kickstarter every week to see what new and exciting things people are coming up with. Sometimes a new invention or book catches my fancy and sure, I'll drop some cash to see someone else's idea come to life.

I even see games pop up on Kickstarter and, frankly, I am so down with this. I mostly see PC games like the Double Fine Adventure project or *Wasteland 2*, but I think a few PSN games could get a little pick-me-up from the possibilities it provides. Maybe not all of their funding will come from Kickstarter but they can at least get enough dough to get started. Why not reach out to other people who agree the idea is awesome? This is an opportunity for both small developers and fans. If thatgamecompany had asked for a little help to make *Journey* would you have done it? I definitely would have.

For the developers it gives them a chance to let their game see the light without relying on publisher aid. They can post on Kickstarter, offer some incentives to get people donating, and sit back and promote themselves until they reach their donation deadline. And then they can get to work.

For fans it gives us the unique opportunity to be somehow involved in a product we hope to one day enjoy. It does not, however, give us the right to demand things of the developers. It's their idea and we just need to sit back and watch it play out.

No

Says the fiscally conservative
Roger Burchill

Oh Anne, you sweet, naïve idealist. There's actually a part of me that wants to buy into your utopian vision of passionate, supportive gamers tossing change into the development kitty jar as they sing "Kumbaya" and try to save the rain forests.

But when you say, "It's their idea and we just need to sit back and watch it play out," I wonder what world you reside in. It's certainly not the real world—it's not even the digital ones we love so much.

Gamers are a passionate breed, but people can be blinded by passion. If gamers feel entitled to demand that *Mass Effect 3* change its ending post-release, I can easily imagine the nightmarish development process that'll result when the fan base actually becomes investors. Design by committee will become the rule rather than the exception and that pure design vision that you hoped to support with your donation will quickly evaporate into a haze of "helpful" gamer input.

Sure, there may be the odd occasion when a Kickstarter campaign actually delivers: money flows in, quality game gets made, and the investors get to feel like they had a hand in birthing some interactive art. But it's far more likely that money will be spent and squandered, expectations won't be met, and the game won't even be completed.

It's sound money advice in any world: if you're going to invest in game development, do it as a detached investor, not as an idealistic gamer.

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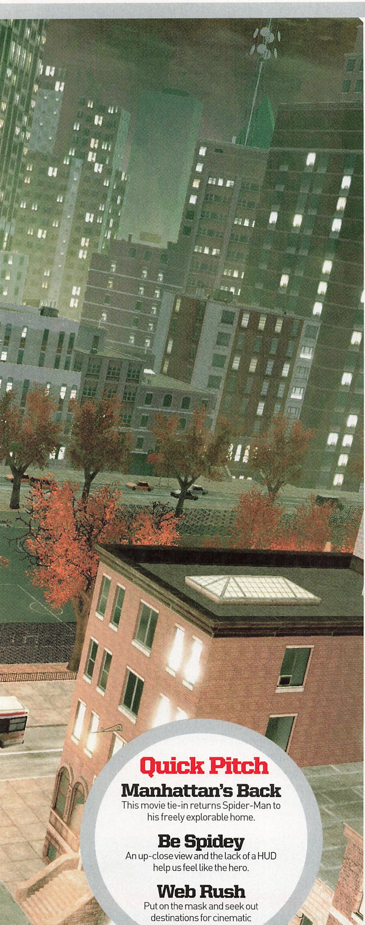
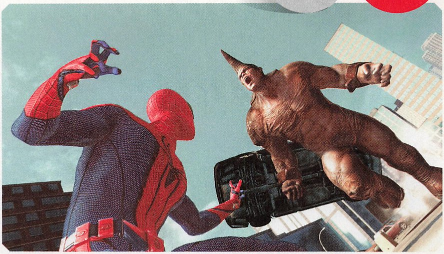


Quick Pitch

Manhattan's Back
This movie tie-in returns Spider-Man to his freely explorable home.

Be Spidey
An up-close view and the lack of a HUD help us feel like the hero.

Web Rush
Put on the mask and seek out destinations for cinematic navigation.



FIRST LOOK Format **PS3** ETA **June** Pub **Activision** Dev **Beenox**

The Amazing Spider-Man

Spinning a fresh start

Despite a release date that puts it just months out from last fall's *Spider-Man: Edge of Time*, upcoming film tie-in *The Amazing Spider-Man* has actually been in the works for two years. When Activision got wind of the movie series reboot—starring Andrew Garfield as Peter Parker and the titular hero—it grew the team at developer Beenox and then split it between projects. That plan might not have worked out so well for the mediocre *Edge of Time*, but from what we've seen of *The Amazing Spider-Man*, the extra time and attention may make this the much better release.

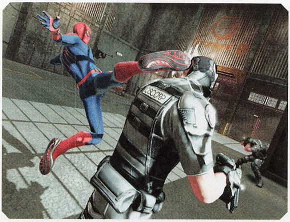
With the opportunity to reboot its own game series, Beenox seized the opportunity to move Spider-Man back to his iconic stomping grounds of Manhattan, making this the first time the city has been available as an open-world sandbox since 2007's lackluster *Spider-Man 3*. The metropolis bustles with activity, with pedestrians shouting encouraging remarks and observations while traffic trudges through the urban intersections. Also found within the city are a variety of side-missions—like chasing down getaway cars and assisting with police shootouts—while the main story missions take place after the film's conclusion, with movie villain The Lizard appearing alongside comic foes Rhino, Iguana, and others yet to be revealed.

Agile Arachnid

Essential as Manhattan is to the comic-spawned universe, it's Spider-Man's new moves that really caught our eye during our first look. Designed with the mantra of "Be Spider-Man," the game ditches persistent on-screen elements like health and map bubbles and puts the camera closer to the iconic webslinger than ever before.

What results is an electric depiction of the young hero's acrobatic ways, as the perspective bounces mightily while he swings between cars and bounds between flagpoles and skyscrapers. Even Spidey himself seems more animated than usual, twirling his body violently in space as he zips from spot to spot. It's a powerful effect, and while the version we saw was awaiting the last bits of polish, his suit looked impeccably detailed while his

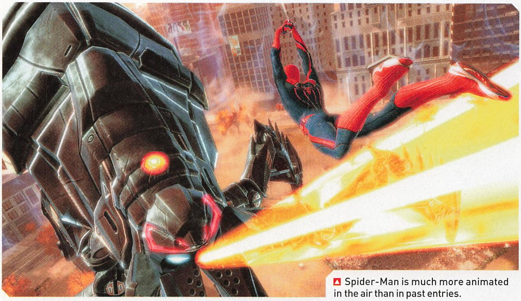
▸▸



Acrobatic moves help Spidey take down both single foes and entire groups with ease.

movements were impressively fluid.

And those who really want to see the world through Spider-Man's eyes can activate the new Web Rush feature, which puts players into a first-person view to spot glowing navigational possibilities in the world. A button tap switches us back into the traditional perspective, while the Webhead takes a particularly cinematic route to the destination. Fans can also manually move through the world as desired, shooting webs to swing between towers and climb freely on windows.



Spider-Man is much more animated in the air than in past entries.

Chaotic Combat

When fisticuffs come into play, Spider-Man's antics seem to take a page from recent *Batman* titles. Spidey racks up combos while nimbly delivering blows to multiple enemies in a group. He can also react to enemies with his web shooters, triggering dodge attacks as prompted or whipping up foes with webs and landing a couple cheap shots. What we saw fell short of the slickness or impact of an *Arkham City* beatdown, but the prospect of signature finishing moves has our interest piqued.

Granted, *The Amazing Spider-Man* isn't entirely concerned with loud, public displays of physical prowess. Taking a cue from the Noir missions in 2010's *Shattered Dimensions*, the hero can also stealthily maneuver through indoor environments, webbing up and dispatching goons without alerting their colleagues. We watched in amusement as Spidey wrapped one enemy in a web cocoon and left him dangling from the ceiling, while another pair fell victim to a metal container quietly cut down from above.

Without a chance to play more of the game and dig into its campaign structure, it's hard to predict whether *The Amazing Spider-Man* will avoid the pitfalls of its predecessors. But what we've seen thus far looks like a welcome shift in direction and tone for the franchise, and while *Edge of Time* was a snoozer, we're hopeful that this movie tie-in can inject some *Arkham Asylum*-like enthusiasm into the series. **ANDREW HAYWARD**

Spider-Man Past and Present

2005

Ultimate Spider-Man
(PS2) This non-film-based outing was the Webhead's best showing on PS2.

2007

Spider-Man 3
(PS3) The final game of the last movie trilogy let players swing around NYC with ease.

2008

Web of Shadows
(PS3) Venom, Wolverine, and others co-starred in this mediocre comic-inspired affair.

2010

Shattered Dimensions
(PS3) Noir and 2099 Spider-Men co-headlined Beenox's series debut.

2011

Edge of Time
(PS3) The unsatisfying *Edge of Time* homed in on the Amazing and 2099 versions of Spider-Man.

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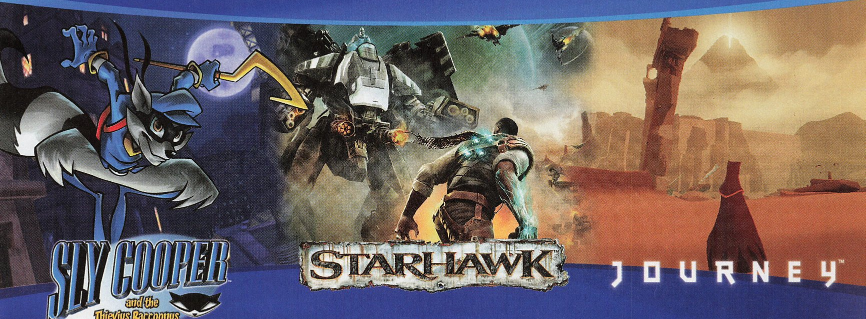

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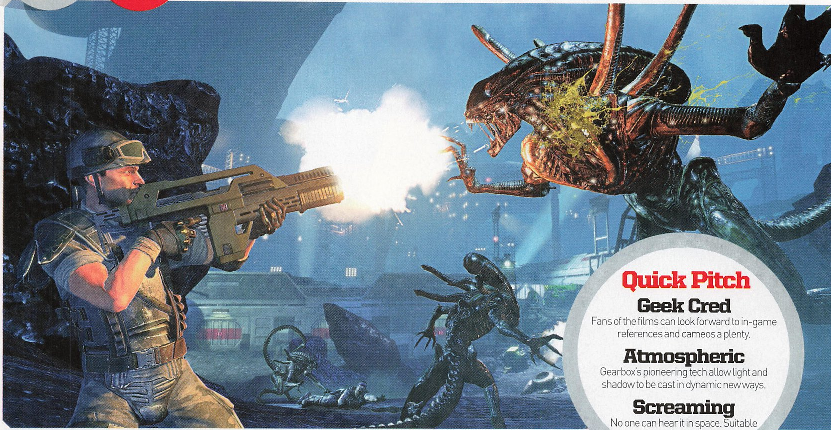


Quick Pitch

Geek Cred
Fans of the films can look forward to in-game references and cameos a plenty.

Atmospheric
Gearbox's pioneering tech allow light and shadow to be cast in dynamic new ways.

Screaming
No one can hear it in space. Suitable alternatives required.

HANDS-ON Format **PS3** ETA **Fall** Pub **Sega** Dev **Gearbox Studios**

Aliens Colonial Marines

In space, no one can hear us scream...like happy little girls

It only takes a couple of hours for a Xenomorph to burst through a chest once a facehugger implants its egg, but man, *Aliens: Colonial Marines'* gestation period has been a helluva a lot longer. After four years in development purgatory, Sega finally pulled back the curtain at a recent press event in Dallas, Texas, offering us our first-ever hands-on with Gearbox's canonical *Aliens* sequel. Yep, the events of the game all started back in James Cameron's classic 1986 film.

Our demo featured the colonial marines' arrival at the *U.S.S. Sulaco*—its interior deck laden with yellow powerloaders, recently deployed escape pods, and severed android legs that serve as a reminder of Ripley's climactic encounter with *Aliens'* Queen. Of course, we know more time has passed and how quickly these creatures can breed, so it wasn't long before our poor, poor rescue squad was completely overrun with several dozen of the famously nasty extraterrestrials. Before we could stop to help out a fellow soldier with a sudden, curious condition developing in his chest region, the walkway back to the rescue ship was completely destroyed, stranding the marines on the very infested, very deadly *Sulaco*.

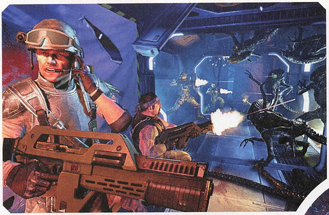
We'll visit other iconic *Aliens* areas during the course of the game, (and perhaps locales from the less popular films in the series—which could be a downer if it wasn't for those badass weapons we know and love). Gearbox has lovingly captured the sights and sounds of iconic artillery like the M240 Flamethrower, the ultra-heavy M56 Smart Gun, and of course, the M41A Pulse Rifle. (If that weren't enough fan service, hardcore *Alien*-philes should keep an eye out for newly realized additions, such as the deployable turrets, that only appear in the film's deleted scenes and concept art.)

An E3 2011 demo teased a fight with the ginormous Alien Queen, however, Gearbox has created a new alien species for the game. We learned that even the familiar drones can come in stealthier and more ferocious forms, but then got to witness the all-new Crusher alien first hand. The enormous, heavily armored bull-like creature is capable of charging across maps at lethal speeds.

What's even more enticing is that old and new species are available in multiplayer. Marines receive selectable loadouts, while Xenomorphs operate using brute force and darkness as their weapons. Superior firepower hardly ensures victory when player-controlled aliens can scurry across darkened ceilings, emerge from crawlspaces, and even kill us with their own acidic blood. It's an interesting balance, or lack thereof, that promises to keep *Colonial Marines'* multiplayer wildly unpredictable. **CHRIS ANTISTA**

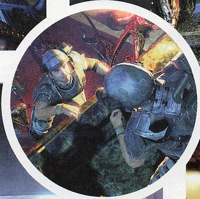
Alien Origins

Recall the moment from the *Aliens* movie when Hicks tells Ripley that it will take 17 days before they can expect a rescue squad? Well, after a 25-plus year wait the *Colonial Marines* cavalry is finally arriving. Talk about foresight—James Cameron is a freakin' visionary genius!

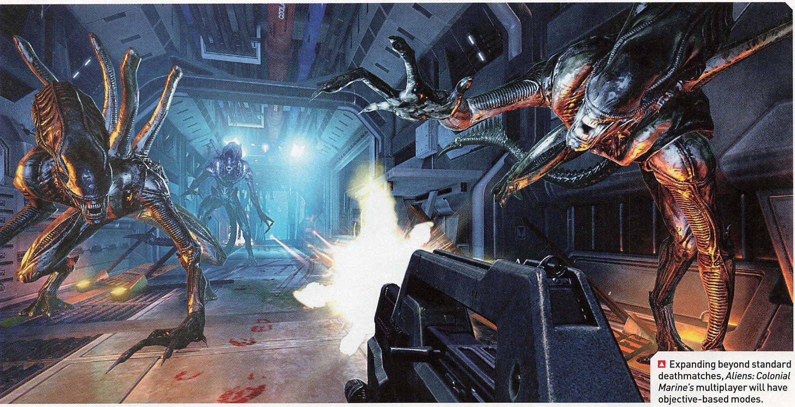


Why are space marines always in need of bigger guns?

Life Lesson #43: Guns don't kill people. Aliens kill people.



It must be said: "That's it man, game over man, game over! What the f—k are we gonna do now?"



Expanding beyond standard deathmatches, *Aliens: Colonial Marine's* multiplayer will have objective-based modes.

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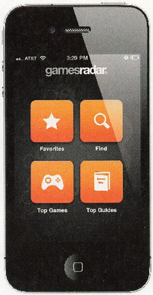
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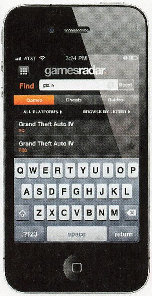
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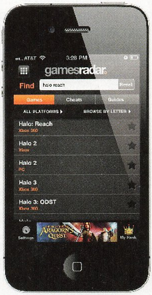
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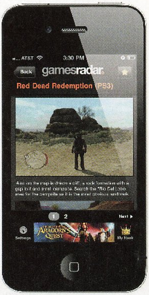
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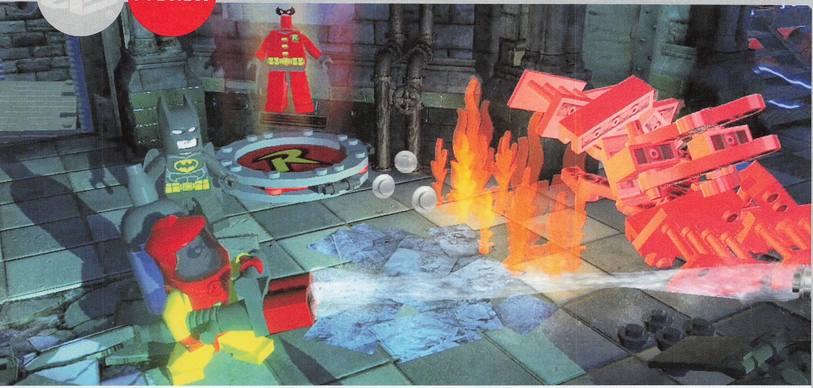


HANDS-ON Format **PS3** ETA **Summer** Pub **Warner Bros. Interactive Ent.** Dev **Traveller's Tales**

LEGO Batman 2 DC Super Heroes

Holy minifigures, Batman! They talk!

Superman, an open-world Gotham City, an entire universe of DC characters and talking minifigures? Color us excited for *LEGO Batman 2: DC Super Heroes*. It's the update we needed to make the series a shiny new box of bricks once again.

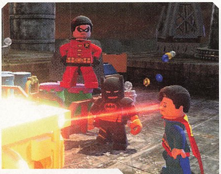
"The story has been written for the game," explains producer Phillip Ring. "We had feedback from the first *LEGO Batman* that people liked the story but weren't exactly sure what was going on. Without talking, it wasn't clear—so for the first time all the characters are going to have voice actors." This is a huge step forward for the *LEGO* series, and going by Traveller's Tales' love for its LEGO-fied franchises, we won't be disappointed as Lex Luthor and Joker take on Batman and the Man of Steel.

Gameplay-wise, it's instantly evident that Traveller's Tales has pushed the Bat-boat out. Combat animations have all been updated, and Batman is now far more reminiscent of his bigger Rocksteady brother as he pummels goons into pieces. Levels are once again a combination of puzzles and wanton destruction, and Batman's suits and gadgets return in updated form. The particularly entertaining Sensor Suit renders the Caped Crusader invisible, but also enables him to x-ray enemies, while the Electricity Suit allows him to transfer charges but also pick up enemies with bolts of electricity and pull them to pieces.

It's when gameplay returns to the hub that things get interesting. A quick switch to Superman, and we soar out of the Bat Cave into Gotham City. "We wanted to do something different with the hub. To push the tech and add new things," enthuses Ring. It's a first for a *LEGO* game to have such an open-world aspect—and it's spectacular. Made up of three islands, it's a massive Gotham sandbox. Watching Superman soar over the city is an exhilarating experience. His fabric cape flutters in the breeze as he flies to the top of Wayne Tower. Fans of the franchise are going to love it.

"We work really closely with DC," grins Ring. "We're really trying to make the LEGO version of this world, but still make it feel like the DC Universe." Hold on to your Batarangs: this is going to be awesome.

JAMES COATES



▲ Burning crates open with his eyes! Stand aside Bats, Superman's arrived.

Dev Talk

"The characters all have their own animations. Take Superman: he almost comes across as cocky, but he's unaware of it. We reflect that in the way he always slicks his hair back."
Phillip Ring
Producer
Traveller's Tales

HANDS-ON Format **PSN** ETA **TBD** Pub **SCEA** Dev **Minority**

Papo & Yo

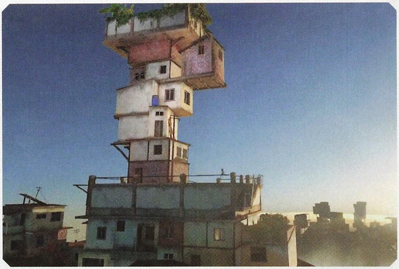
A boy and his monster

Rife with symbolism, *Papo & Yo's* story centers on a boy named Quico and his best friend, Monster, whose addiction to poisonous frogs causes him to fly into a violent rage after consuming them. Despite the danger this poses, Quico will do anything to save Monster.

Papo & Yo is set on South American city streets, but presented through the filter of a child's imagination. The world is surreal—chalk drawings come to life and buildings shift and relocate as we solve puzzles. The controls are simple, but the puzzles aren't always as forgiving. Hint boxes scattered throughout the game give us a nudge in the right direction on occasion.

The pink, hulking Monster is noticeably absent during our demo, as Quico races through the streets and over rooftops solving puzzles to progress through the game. We spent our demo pursuing a young girl who would disappear as we approached. Pulling chalk-drawn levers revealed stairs, and cardboard boxes played proxy to real buildings as Quico lifted and moved them in order to cross a chasm.

When we finally reached the girl, we were transported to another setting—a slow-motion, monochromatic memory. We followed a glowing path and the last thing we saw was a car moving straight toward us before everything faded to white. **ANNE LEWIS**



▲ Clearly games are better than real life. Why shouldn't we be able to move buildings using our imagination?

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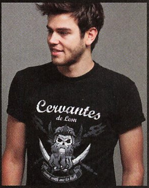
FOLD AWAY PEAK
ALSO IN SANGUINE RED...
... AND SYNCHRONISED BLACK
STITCHING DETAIL



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Edge magazine

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Graeme Boyd, Xbox

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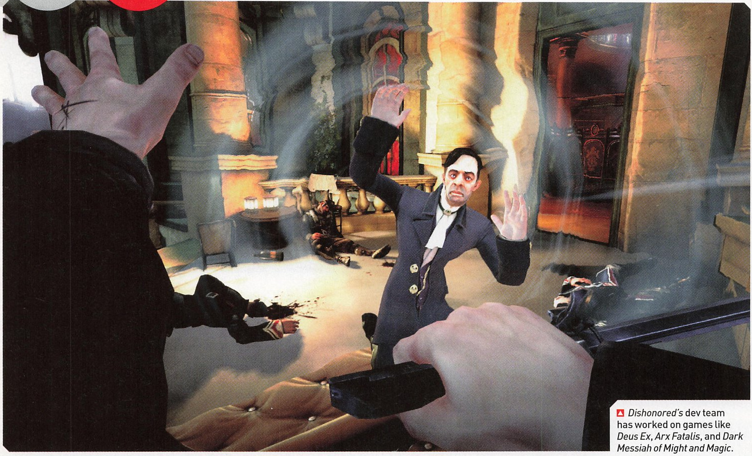


Dishonored's dev team has worked on games like *Deus Ex*, *Arx Fatalis*, and *Dark Messiah of Might and Magic*.

FIRST LOOK Format **PS3** ETA **TBD** Pub **Bethesda Softworks** Dev **Arkane Studios**

Dishonored

Time to stick it to the ruling class

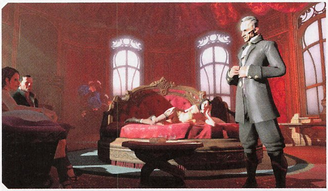
The politically tinged first-person actioner, *Dishonored*, isn't the type of game that holds our hand over every obstacle and gives strict instructions about how to play. As an assassin, we're given freedom to choose how we eliminate targets thanks to the game's open-ended design and a pool of supernatural abilities.

Don't feel like sneaking down the street past guards? Try using super-speed to gain some momentum, double-jump off the roof, then teleport the rest of the way. Or jump down from the roof, shift into a guard's body, then casually stroll down the block without fear of being caught.

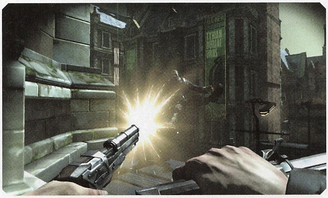
Prefer not to directly engage the enemy? Perhaps we summon a swarm of plague rats to pick their bones clean instead. But beware, the rats could come after us next. Maybe we just shoot everybody in the face. That works too.

We must make our choices carefully though, because our playstyle is discreetly tracked in *Dishonored*. If we ruthlessly cut down enemies and wreak havoc in a brothel on the way to an assassination, then the game will treat us like a cold-hearted manhunter. However, if we're stealthy and cunning, the game will take us in different directions on a branching story path.

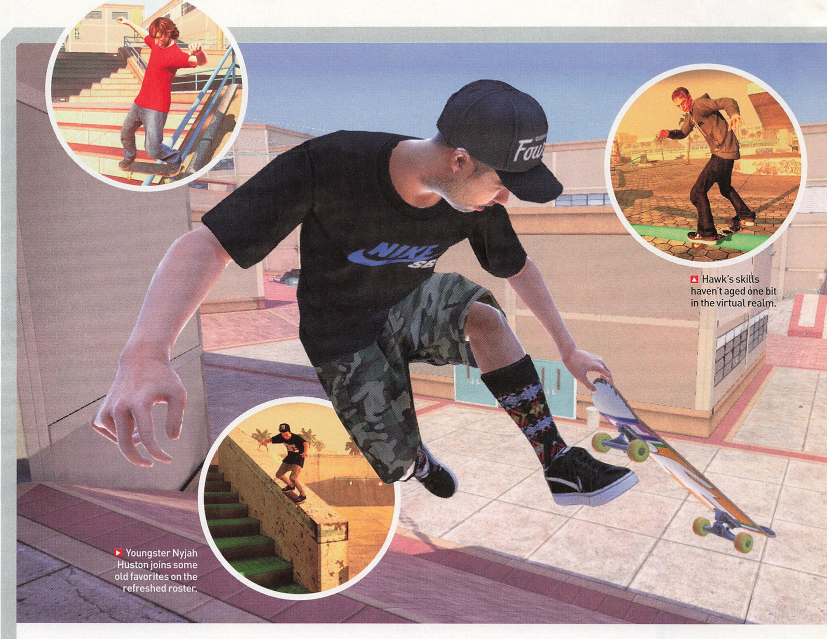
We don't yet know if *Dishonored* will live up to its awesome atmospheric potential, but we can't wait to receive our first kill assignment later this year. **ANDREW GROEN**



Vice and corruption seemingly run rampant in the city of Dunwall—the vision of former *Half-Life 2* art director Viktor Antonov.



It's like *BioShock* and *Assassin's Creed* had a baby...and then that baby played *Deus Ex* every day for a decade.



Hawk's skills haven't aged one bit in the virtual realm.

Youngster Nyjah Huston joins some old favorites on the refreshed roster.

HANDS ON Format **PSN** ETA **Summer** Pub **Activision** Dev **Robomodo**

Tony Hawk's Pro Skater HD

Grinding back into form

Activision's mash-up revival of the first two *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater* games is nearly ready to roll out, if our latest hands-on is any indication. We had a chance to dip into four of the seven updated stages in the upcoming download, and while spots like The Hangar and Marseilles have been outfitted with high-resolution textures and models, the gameplay feels just like we remember from PSone.

It's important to point out the "feel" of the play, since Robomodo didn't simply copy and paste the existing mechanics into *Pro Skater HD*. A side-by-side test between the PSone and HD versions of the original game's Warehouse stage bears that out, as the update plays much faster with smoother controls and animations. The tricks and absurd combo lines poured like a river from our fingers as soon as we hit our first half-pipe, with that all-important sensation of being a top skater still intact.

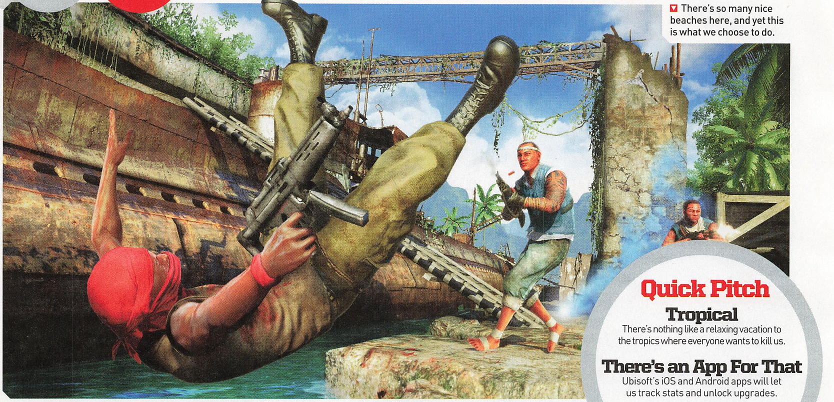
Beyond the slick visual bump, *Pro Skater HD* also arrives with fresh faces in tow—including Hawk's son, Riley, along with Lyn-Z Adams Hawkins and Nyjah Huston (old favorites like Rodney Mullen and Eric Koston also return). Hilariously, the game even includes a hidden "pixelated" version of Hawk himself based on the original PSone entries.

With a promised suite of single-player and online modes, *Pro Skater HD* seems like a true renaissance of the series' brightest days—one that's sure to bring out the wannabe boarder in both old fans and newcomers alike.

ANDREW HAYWARD

Jam Packed

Music was a key component of the early *Tony Hawk* games' experience. About half of *Pro Skater HD's* soundtrack will reportedly be comprised of older songs, with the other half being new tracks that capture the spirit and quality expected from a top-flight *Tony Hawk* entry.



There's so many nice beaches here, and yet this is what we choose to do.

Quick Pitch

Tropical

There's nothing like a relaxing vacation to the tropics where everyone wants to kill us.

There's an App For That

Ubisoft's iOS and Android apps will let us track stats and unlock upgrades.

Battlecry

In the jungle, everybody can hear us scream—and we'll gain power for it.

HANDS-ON Format **PS3** ETA **September** Pub **Ubisoft** Dev **Ubisoft Montreal / Massive Ent.**

Far Cry 3

Friends don't let friends die alone

The world of the online FPS is a crowded one. This was a fact strongly considered by Ubisoft when prepping for the third title in its *Far Cry* series; as such, the publisher purchased Swedish studio Massive Entertainment in 2008 to develop the game's multiplayer component. The studio is best known for its award-winning real-time tactical PC game, *World in Conflict*, but it might not have been the most obvious choice.

"If you play *World in Conflict*, it's an RTS but it's kind of controlled like an FPS," says Massive game designer Daniel Berlin. "It goes without saying that FPS has been a favorite genre of the guys in the studio, and to get to do *Far Cry* was really almost like coming home. It was what we wanted to do."

The premise of *Far Cry 3's* multiplayer action can best be summed up in two words: friends matter. When the team looked at the assortment of online shooters on the market, they saw plenty of teamplay modes but very little in the way of camaraderie. As such, they've been hard at work engineering meaningful teamplay into gameplay. The idea is that even if we have no intention of playing nice, we're still going to do it because we want to get the best weapons and the most XP.

Battlecry, for instance, is a rather new perspective on in-game communication. Simply click both thumbsticks simultaneously and all characters within earshot will hear our roar. The more teammates in our vicinity, the more points (of both personal and team support varieties) we're rewarded with, as well as various speed and health buffs. It's an elegant way of encouraging awareness and collaboration between teammates, and gives our character a voice beyond our own (the team says it was motivated by action and war movies, which often portray battle cries as powerful tools in the field).

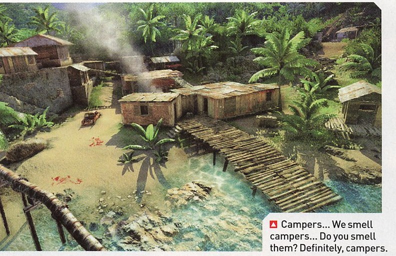
We'll be rewarded for reviving teammates as well; if we see a downed buddy and have the heart to go out of our way and help them, we'll be handsomely compensated (and if they've got any manners at all, then immediately upon being grabbed from the jaws of death they'll reward us with a revitalizing Battlecry for our trouble). Tagging enemies is also a key strategic aspect of *Far Cry 3*: with an enemy in sight, a touch of the Select button will make them a marked man, plainly visible on our teammates' HUD. Likewise, we can tag downed teammates to let them know that we're on our way to help; either way, we'll get a nice bundle of points for our non-fatal marksmanship. It's all part of the game's teamplay economy, a central part of the *Far Cry* multiplayer experience.

Interestingly, this teamplay economy is being extended beyond the living room. As we go through the game,

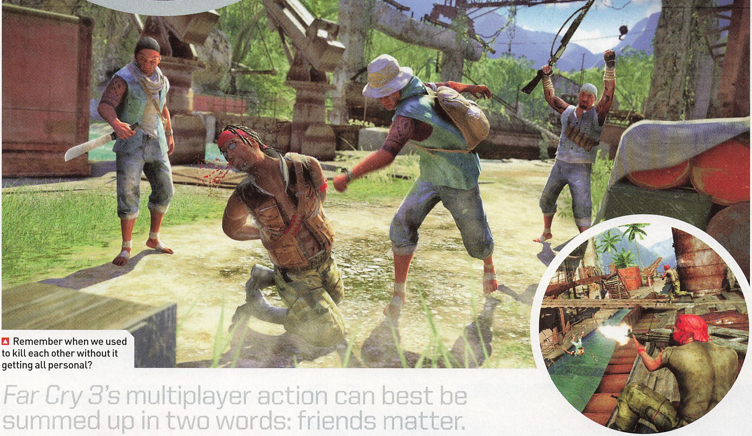
Dev Talk

"We're constantly trying to come up with ways to improve what's out there. We play everything. We're inspired by that tremendously, and entertained by it tremendously. We play many other things: other computer games, board games, real sports... So we're really trying to be inspired."

Magnus Jansén
Senior lead game designer



Campers... We smell campers... Do you smell them? Definitely, campers.

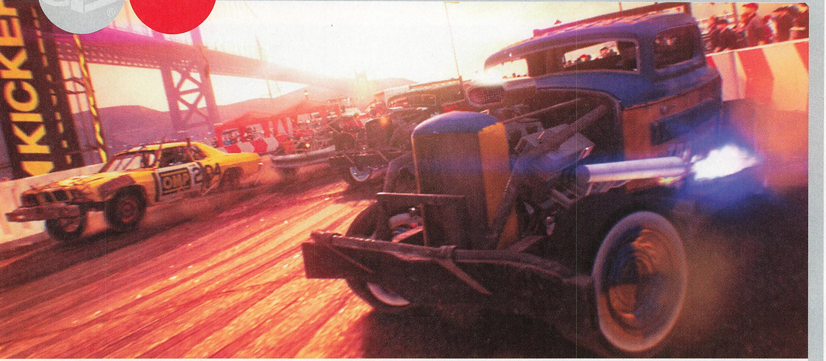


Remember when we used to kill each other without it getting all personal?

Far Cry 3's multiplayer action can best be summed up in two words: friends matter.

we'll collect intelligence that gets us progressively closer to acquiring new items, skills, and weapons. Decoding this intelligence takes time, however; while we're able to do so inside the game itself, an accompanying iOS and Android app will also let us download, manage, and decode intelligence while we're away from our console. Should we score, say, a special shotgun that's not up our alley, but would be cherished by a boomstick-loving friend... We can gift it to them via the app once it's unlocked. We'll also be able to use it to track our skills and progress over time, and to compare ourselves against those on our friends list. It's a long-term meta-game that harnesses a brand of entertainment not unlike playing a slot machine.

At the end of each round, the highest-scoring player of the match gets the choice to either take out their anger on the enemy or show them mercy. In our build of the game, this manifested itself as either a brutal punch to the face or cutting them free, but the developers expect to have some 30 animations in the game by the time it ships. Think of them as finishing moves that highlight the best multiplayer performers. **EVAN SHAMOON**



HANDS-ON Format **PS3** ETA **May** Pub **Codemasters** Dev **Codemasters Racing Studio**

Dirt Showdown

Fender bender

Racking up more miles with *Dirt: Showdown's* Rampage mode, we find ourselves hurtling around a makeshift arena below San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge in a massive red hearse. The hearse is a fake car called a Lafayette Eulogy—chiefly because real auto manufacturers don't much like seeing their rides totaled in a videogame. Our death-wagon handles like a tank, and within no time at all we're racking up 2,000 points per wrecked opponent. After 17 years, the wait for a replacement for cult classic *Destruction Derby* finally seems over. JAMES COATES

▼ Why does the *Ghostbusters* theme keep popping into our head?

FIRST LOOK Format **PS3** ETA **Q2 2013**
Pub **Paramount Digital/Namco Bandai** Dev **Digital Extremes**

Star Trek

Sorta like Army of Two with Kirk and Spock

So, what happens next? It's a question fans of 2009's *Star Trek* reboot have been asking, and this tasty-looking shooter (set just before the film's sequel) sets out to answer.

Digital Extremes aims to open the game up to a wider audience. Just as JJ Abrams insisted *Star Trek* be a great sci-fi film first, the focus here is solid cover-shooting, big on bro-ish banter, and meaty action scenes.

Don't sweat it, Death. We have days like this too—they're called Mondays.

HANDS-ON Format **PS3** ETA **June** Pub **THQ** Dev **Vigil Games**

Darksiders II

The one thing no one can escape

Death comes for everyone—some more quickly than others, and especially when we piss him off. That's when he comes after us wielding dual scythes, a giant hammer, and more destructive spells than we can handle.

In *Darksiders II*, horseman-of-the-apocalypse Death has put aside his morbid duties to head out on a journey to clear the name of his brother War—the protagonist from the first *Darksiders*. Rather than joining War on Earth and facing the Charred Council head on, he instead chooses to take the back way through the Nether Realm to figure out a lower-key way to solve the problem.

That's not to say he can't hold his own in a more direct conflict. In fact, his search through various dungeons will require both cunning and skill in combat. After traversing lava-laden areas, flipping switches, solving puzzles, and conniving other Nether Realm beings into helping him out, he's more often than not met with a slew of enemies after his head. Fortunately, with a multitude of weapons and tools like the Deathgrip (which acts like a powerful grappling hook), he's able to dispatch them relatively easily.

Death's skills really shine when his skills in combat and traversal are tested simultaneously. While fighting a corrupted, skyscraper-sized Guardian, he's forced to dodge the creature's powerful strikes to buy time to climb up its arms and destroy the three Heart Stones powering it. It's a great use of all the skills Death has accumulated over his travels, and offers wonderful insight into what's to come. TAYLOR COCKE

Bros Until the End

While not technically brothers, Death and War are two of the final four Nephilim. So, when War is accused of starting the Apocalypse too early, Death, Fury, and Strife set out to prove his innocence.

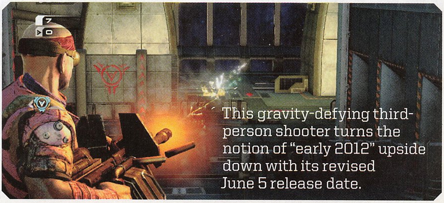
But first comes gameplay. It's a drop-in online co-op, trading phaser shots with alien scum, and bounding between handily chest-high blocks of cover. It's pleasingly frantic, but its shooting gallery battlefields can grate.

That's where LSPUs come in. Early on, Kirk and Spock find themselves unable to dock with the *Enterprise*. Cue them strapping on Life Support Propulsion Units and roaring into space. The sense of speed is palpable as we veer from debris, narrowly missing mines to reach the starship intact.

Later, things get touchy feely when Kirk is smoked by a paralyzing toxin. Spock has to physically carry him to a med-bay while the captain pops off weary shots. This two-hit combo of buddy chemistry and thundering sci-fi action looks to nail the high standard set by the films, and just might answer a few burning questions in the process too. JAMES COATES

Where the hell is...

Inversion (NAMCO BANDAI)



This gravity-defying third-person shooter turns the notion of "early 2012" upside down with its revised June 5 release date.

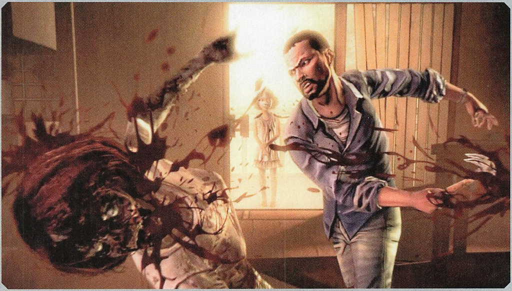
The latest on...

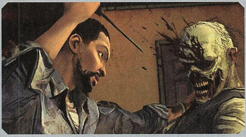
New shots, new games, new info

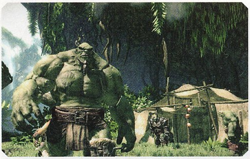
The Walking Dead

Format **PSN** ETA **Spring** Pub **Telltale Games**
Dev **Telltale Games**

We've read the comics. We've seen the show. Now we can play the game. In a step far, far away from anything it's ever done, Telltale Games is pushing its own boundaries in the most gruesome way. Stepping back from the comic and the show, the *Walking Dead* game focuses on a new set of characters—mainly Lee Everett, a criminal, and Clementine, a young girl (though we will see familiar faces from the TV series). *Dead* presents us with puzzles and dilemmas, and Telltale's episodic formula will break the story into five bloody, flesh-eating monthly segments.



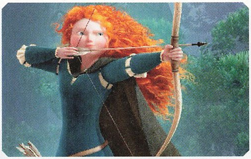




Of Orcs and Men

Format **PS3** ETA **Q2** Pub **Focus Home Int.** Dev **Cyanide**

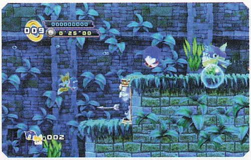
Time to stick it to the Man...or at least the Empire of Men. In *Of Orcs and Men*, the humans are the bad guys. We play as an Orc soldier in the war between Humankind and the Orcs and Goblins as we set out to kill the man responsible for all the bloodshed.



Brave: The Video Game

Format **PS3** ETA **June** Pub/Dev **Disney Interactive**

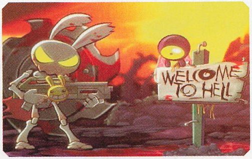
Set to release alongside the forthcoming Pixar film, *Brave* is the story of Merida, a young Scottish girl who must break a magical curse and save her kingdom. We, or at least our kids, will wield a sword as well as the character's claim to fame—her bow.



Sonic the Hedgehog 4: Ep. II

Format **PSN** ETA **May** Pub **Sega** Dev **Dimps / Sonic Team**

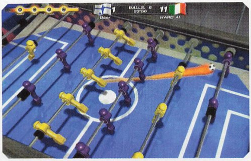
Episode I released in October 2010, and this long-awaited follow-up finds Sonic and Tails facing off against an allied Dr. Eggman and Metal Sonic. We can also play a friend locally or take the Blue Blur online, but sadly, this could be Sonic's final episodic outing.



Hell Yeah!

Format **PSN** ETA **TBD 2012** Pub **Sega** Dev **Arkedo Studios**

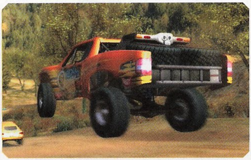
Formally titled *Hell Yeah! Wrath of the Dead Rabbit*, Ash is the Prince of Hell—and also a dead rabbit. In this platforming action title, Ash hacks and slashes his way through the denizens of the underworld while oftentimes driving a giant buzzsaw. It's a wild, wacky, gory mess of a game.



Foosball 2012

Format **PS3/Vita** ETA **Spring** Pub **TBD** Dev **Grip Games**

To be honest, we don't get it. We like foosball just as much as the next frat boy, but a foosball videogame? The table aspect of the classic table game would seem a necessity. The notion perplexes us, but it does support Move and will offer cross-platform play.



Jeremy McGrath's Offroad

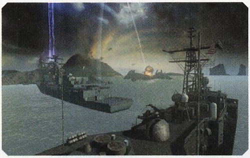
Format **PS3** ETA **Q2** Pub **Reverb Publishing** Dev **2XL Games**

We may not be able to do any offroad racing in our little econobox but we do appreciate four-wheeled, 800-horsepower race trucks capable of handling the strain. The arcade racing action takes place inside a persistent game world at 60 frames per second in 1080p resolution.

Babel Rising

Format **PSN** ETA **Summer** Pub **Ubisoft** Dev **Mando Prod.**

In *Babel Rising* we become a deity determined to stop mankind from building the Tower of Babel. We can choose to gift the little upstarts with an earthquake or a flood to show them who's boss. Ah, so many choices, so little... nevermind.



Battleship

Format **PS3** ETA **May** Pub **Activision** Dev **Double Helix**

There's this board game called Battleship, and there's also a movie coming out based on that board game but it doesn't have anything to do with the board game... Anyway, this is the videogame based on the movie based on the board game.

The Ratchet & Clank Collection

Format **PS3** ETA **Fall** Pub **SCEA** Dev **Idol Minds/Insomniac**

Finally! *Ratchet & Clank* is getting the HD treatment it deserves. The franchise's first three games will be released together with remastered graphics, a multiplayer mode for *Up Your Arsenal*, and those wonderful Trophies we all love so very much.

Gut Reaction

What's strong and what's wrong

▲ Rumor Has It

Blizzard has hinted at a *Diablo III* console port. The PC game releases in May.

▲ Journey On

Sadly, co-founder Kellee Santiago is leaving thatgamecompany, but we wonder what dreams await for her next project.

▲ The Sackies

The Sackies, *LittleBigPlanet's* annual awards, have been announced. Scan the QR code for the winners.

▼ No Respawn

SOCOM, *MAG*, and *Unit 13* developer Zipper Interactive has been shut down.

▼ Get Well Soon!

Street Fighter producer Yoshinori Ono has temporarily stepped down due to health issues.

▼ TBDoomed

Sega announced it's cancelling some projects due to its poor financial performance.

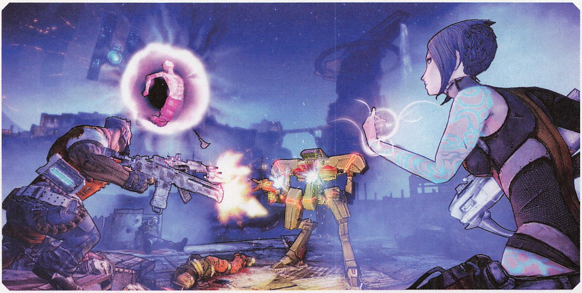
RELO

Stylish roleplaying shooter BORDERLANDS 2 aims to deliver story through superior firepower

BY MATT CABRAL

ADED

Format **PS3** ETA **September** Pub **2K Games** Dev **Gearbox Software**



Given the surprise critical and commercial success of 2009's *Borderlands*, developer Gearbox Software could have easily followed up their addictive shoot-and-loot fest with a phoned-in sequel—give us more guns and some brand new baddies to unleash on, collect a paycheck, and call it a day. However, like the vault-hunting, wasteland-wandering protagonists of the roleplaying shooter, its creators have zero interest in treading the well-traveled path. Oh sure, we can count on callousing our trigger fingers behind *Borderlands 2's* boasted gajillion guns, but if Gearbox has their way, they'll engage more than just gamers' twitchy reflexes. Everything about the sequel, from its richer story and refined skill trees to its fresh cast of characters and amped-up enemy A.I., is aiming to keep players entertained even when they're not knocking rampaging dwarfs on their backsides with a burst of buckshot.

PRETTY PANDORA

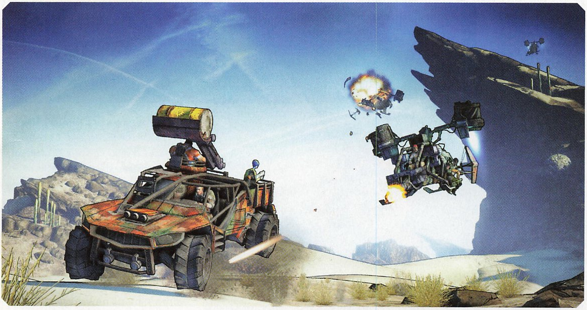
Pandora's varied visual presentation is the game's most obvious improvement. While *Borderlands'* distinctive and defining cel-shaded style was unquestionably cool, it expressed itself primarily through dusty desert expanses and barren shantytowns. Creative director Paul Hellquist sums up the first game's limited landscapes: "It was like coming to Earth and being stuck in the Sahara, not realizing there's also the Amazon and the Great Plains."

Upon teasing a possible return to some previously visited Pandora locales, lead level designer Jason Reiss elaborated on *Borderlands 2's* more diverse destinations: "One of the big things is the new environments... showing more of Pandora. We feel like we really only showed one small, little continent inside of Pandora. We didn't show how varied this alien world actually is and how many places we can go. Now we're showing a new side of the world...it's all about ensuring the player is able to see all of what this world has to offer."

As our demo begins, Reiss' statements hit us as hard as the

hurtling tail spikes of the approaching Needle Stalkers—a new nasty that appears to be made up of the meanest parts of a bat and scorpion. We do our best to defend against its aggressive attacks, but it's hard to resist rubbernecking the rushing streams, rocky outcroppings, towering cliffs, crashing waterfalls, and windswept grasslands that surround us. Save for a bit of water here and some snow there, *Borderlands'* different environments looked pretty much like the same place repeated, but swapped with a new color palette. This particular area, however, appropriately named Wildlife Preserve, sports a lush presentation more reminiscent of Jurassic Park than the Pandora of old. Similarities to the dinosaur theme park are further supported by the prehistoric-like beasties attempting to eat our faces as we soak in the sights like first-time tourists. As Salvador, *Borderlands 2's* take on its predecessor's Berserker class (now called Gunzerker), we eventually wade through waves of the spike-spitting baddies who, by the way, also possess a shield-cloaking power.

▼ Traversing Pandora's expansive terrain is now a breeze thanks to better-handling vehicles and the option to cram four co-op partners into a single ride.

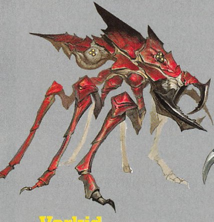


NEW OLD FRIENDS

Satisfied that we'd properly littered the pretty landscape with Needle Stalker corpses, we hoof it from the remaining foes and escape into a nearby cave. On top of providing temporary refuge from Pandora's deadly denizens, the rocky shelter hosts an encounter with a familiar face from the first game. Mordecai, *Borderland's* playable Hunter-class character, offers Salvador some valuable mission intel while also providing a peek at the sequel's much-improved character animations and interactions. Where chatting-up non-playable characters in the previous game amounted to little more than slogging through text boxes while cardboard characters stared blankly at us, mingling with *Borderlands 2's* colorful cast of crazies affords a far more dynamic experience. Hellquist explains: "All of our missions are now given through voice. We put lots of effort into the characters, so they're fully animated and they're using face effects for lip-synching, instead of just standing and staring. They also walk around their space and feel like they're living their lives.

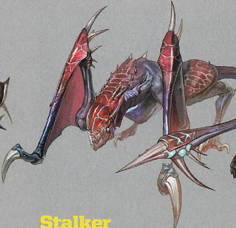
A NEW BREED OF BAD

On top of thwarting familiar Borderlands threats—such as Skags, Spiderants, and Psychos—plan on filling a fresh crop of freaks, creeps, and crazies full of smoking holes



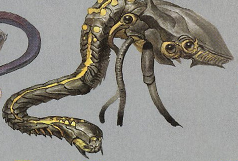
Varkid

Perpetuating a vicious cycle of death and destruction, these aggressive arachnids spawn eggs that hatch flying versions of themselves; once airborne, they then spit out a second round of eggs resulting in Badass Varkids.



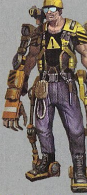
Stalker

Combining webbed wings and a scorpion-like tail, Stalkers deliver a double threat. Getting a bead on these baddies isn't so bad, but unleashing our payload before their spiky projectiles turn us into a pincushion is a challenge.



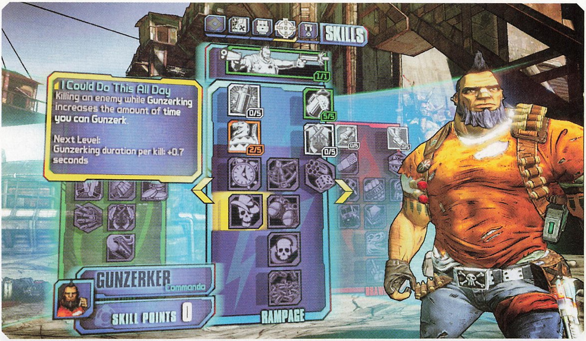
Thresher

Able to burrow beneath the ground and attack from afar with flailing tentacles, Threshers are a fearsome force. Its basic version is about as threatening as a kitten on catnip compared to its fire-imbued big brother.



Hyperion Engineer

Human enemies display dynamic behavior, allowing them to dodge attacks and quickly retaliate. Hyperion's mech-like tech keeps them from becoming bullet-sponging meatbags and fulfills our *Terminator* fantasies too.



I Could Do This All Day
Killing an enemy while Gunzerking increases the amount of time you can Gunzerk.

Next Level:
Gunzerking duration per kill: +0.7 seconds

Incorporating a far friendlier UI than its predecessor, *Borderlands 2's* slick interface—displaying a cool 3D model of our main character—doesn't make us menu-out of the main game.

This really allows us to tell the story during play, instead of through text, which is what we were doing a lot of before."

As cool as it is witnessing our old sharp-shooting friend engage with Salvador in a life-like fashion, what Mordecai has to say is even more exciting. In his new supporting role, he instructs the burly gunslinger to find Bloodwing, who happens to have Claptrap's upgrade software hidden in his collar. While references to these two characters will mean little to newcomers, the mere mention of Mordecai's winged combat companion and *Borderlands'* show-stealing bot should be enough to get seasoned fans on the next transport to Pandora.

Replacing the original vault-hunting heroes with a fresh quartet of fortune and glory seekers might seem risky, but Gearbox is turning the gamble into the ultimate fan-pleasing payoff. "What we thought would be stronger than reusing *Borderlands'* same characters, is bringing in four new character classes and really adding lots of new gameplay to the sequel." says Hellquist. "But we also wanted to give the fans their favorite characters in a new light, which is why they're all integrated into the plot... You'll meet them all. We hope to give players more information about the characters they played before—where have they gone since we last left them, what have they been doing, how are they related to this big plot we're involved in?"

TALL TALES

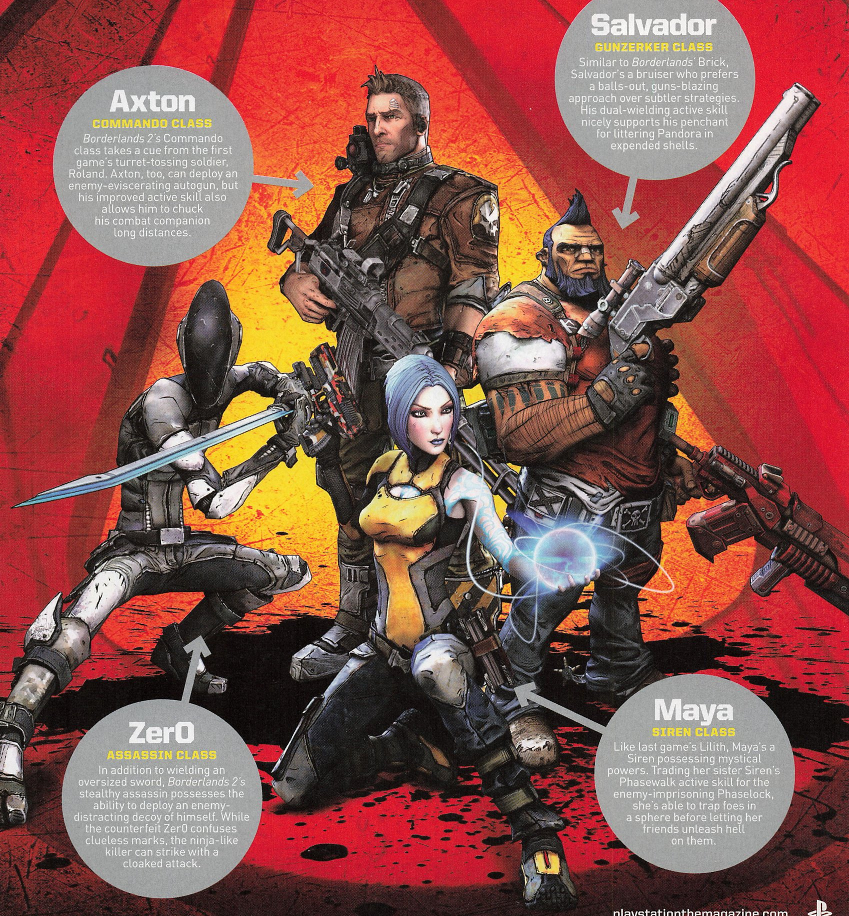
No doubt a windfall for fans, this character-exploring approach could potentially alienate those who've never had the pleasure of painting Pandora with pulpy Skag innards. With this in mind, Gearbox is putting as much effort into crafting a better story—and a complementary mission structure—as they are dreaming up new ways to thin Pandora's pissed-off populace.

Conceding that the original's narrative was not as strong as its gameplay, Hellquist stresses the renewed focus on storytelling: "We always had the high-level vault-hunting thing, but didn't have time to really focus on the details of the story as much as we would have liked. So from day one, we were like, 'Okay, how is this story going to relate to the missions and the gameplay?' Our entire story and arc of the plot has been the backbone of building the game since the very beginning... We even reworked the mission system to be more dynamic so that it can react to the story and surprise the player. We've only scratched the surface of what the *Borderlands* universe and Pandora have to offer from a narrative standpoint."

A welcome by-product of *Borderlands 2* attempting to spin an absorbing yarn is providing solo armchair adventurers with a much richer experience. Looting, leveling, and bloodletting bandits

PANDORA'S NEW POSSE

Picking up five years after the first game, Borderlands 2 features a fresh foursome of loot-loving gunslingers



Axton

COMMANDO CLASS

Borderlands 2's Commando class takes a cue from the first game's turret-tossing soldier, Roland. Axton, too, can deploy an enemy-eviscerating autogun, but his improved active skill also allows him to chuck his combat companion long distances.

Salvador

GUNZERKER CLASS

Similar to *Borderlands'* Brick, Salvador's a bruiser who prefers a balls-out, guns-blazing approach over subtler strategies. His dual-wielding active skill nicely supports his penchant for littering Pandora in expended shells.

Zer0

ASSASSIN CLASS

In addition to wielding an oversized sword, *Borderlands 2's* stealthy assassin possesses the ability to deploy an enemy-distracting decoy of himself. While the counterfeit Zer0 confuses clueless marks, the ninja-like killer can strike with a cloaked attack.

Maya

SIREN CLASS

Like last game's Lilith, Maya's a Siren possessing mystical powers. Trading her sister Siren's Phasewalk active skill for the enemy-imprisoning Phaselock, she's able to trap foes in a sphere before letting her friends unleash hell on them.

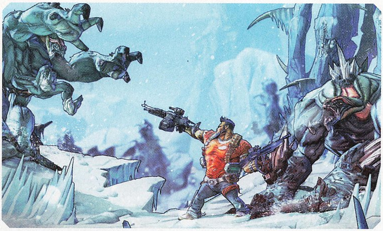
and bruisers in *Borderlands* is a blast when accompanied by a couple buddies, but the experience can turn into a grind when wandering the wasteland alone. Following an unwavering assurance *Borderlands 2* hasn't abandoned its predecessor's "super, awesome co-op experience", Hellquist dishes on the immersive solo experience: "When you're playing alone, you need the story to help keep you engaged and caring about what you're doing...that was the element that was missing in the first game. I think the story, the surprising missions, the character interactions and dialogue, and the quirky, dark humor will keep the solo player much more engaged than in the previous game."

SMART BOTS

While the prospect of keeping all Pandora's loot for ourselves is appealing, we're not so sure we're ready to abandon our allies after battling some of *Borderlands 2's* significantly enhanced enemy A.I. Favoring smart, aware adversaries over the first game's rampaging, bullet-sponging baddies, the sequel demands a more thoughtful strategy on our part.

Following a tip from Mordecai on Bloodwing's whereabouts, we enter an industrial shipyard area crawling with enemies who aren't about to line up for target practice. A Human Combat Engineer first surprises us by dynamically dodging our hail of hot lead, but really gets our attention when he recovers and tosses a hunk of shrapnel at our heads. Thanks to one of Salvador's grenade skills—allowing him to hurl an explosive, which then spawns several smaller blasts upon detonation—we're able to turn the pesky enemy into a blood-and-guts puddle. Continuing this highly effective, albeit way over-the-top approach, we continue to pile the corpses like cord wood and are even treated to the occasional chuckle-worthy death cry from fallen foes, like "I'd nearly paid off my house!"

Turns out the joke's on us though, as we're soon introduced to an army of Loaders—robo-baddies reminiscent of the power loader Ripley uses to combat



WEAPONS OF MASS DISTINCTION

Pandora's eight gun manufacturers craft hand-cannons with their own unique look and feel, allowing gamepad gunslingers to deal death differently with each one

Maliwan

Slick and shiny, Maliwan's sci-fi-styled weapons would be the envy of any self-respecting space marine. More than a wardrobe accessory though, these pretty peashooters specialize in eliminating enemies with elemental effects.

Vladof

Identified by their spinning, minigun-like barrels—even on their rocket launchers—Vladof's intimidating visual presence is matched only by their impressive rate of fire; the longer their triggers are squeezed, the faster they'll spit out slugs.

Dahl

High-tech hardware that wouldn't look out of place on *Call of Duty* or *Battlefield's* frontlines, Dahl's military-grade weapons are sturdy, stable, and superior messengers of death thanks to the super-accurate burst fire capability of their guns.

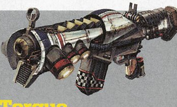
Bandit

Made from a patchwork of Pandora junk, Bandit's guns aren't pretty or accurate, but they make up for their lack of aesthetics and accuracy with their epic magazine size—missing a target on the first shot doesn't matter when there are 99 more shots in the clip.

Aliens' queen Xenomorph (little coincidence since developer Gearbox is also developing *Aliens: Colonial Marines*). More menacing than the movie's glorified forklift, however, these mechanized monsters come in a variety of human-hunting flavors. The PWR Loader, for example, marches forward while spinning dual bullet-deflecting fan blades, while the BUL Loader charges toward us following its transformation into a bulldozer. Oh, and then there's the EXP Loaders, which are content to simply sneak up beside us and commit suicide in a particularly explosive fashion. After a few respawns at a nearby NEW-U station, we start to get the hang of turning these mech meanies into heaps of smoking, sparking scrap metal—taking their fragile legs out with explosive rounds seems to be the way to go. Still, just as the area begins resembling a robot graveyard, we notice some

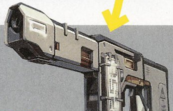
> "The Tediores are interesting, wacky and really fun. Being able to throw their disposable SMGs is just great; I love getting the finishing kill by throwing them into the face of the guy coming after me."

Paul Hellquist Creative Director, Gearbox Software



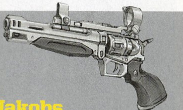
Torgue

These imposing heavy hitters don't have a large ammo capacity, but each of their shots pack a satisfying explosive punch—who needs a barrage of bullets when it takes just one to turn a charging psycho into a chunky smear of flesh?



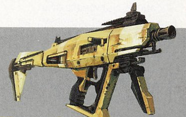
Tediore

Disposable Tediores are tossed aside once they've done their health meter-draining job. Conveniently enough, the expendable piece then works like a makeshift grenade—the more bullets left in its discarded clip, the bigger the boom.



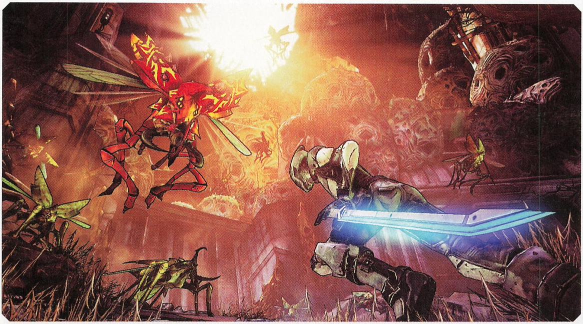
Jakobs

Sporting classic wood grain touches, these Old West-flavored pieces are favored by those who'd rather fan the hammer than squeeze the trigger. They may not auto-fire, but they make up for that with each shot's belly-blasting impact.



Hyperion

As rare as they are effective, Hyperions offer high accuracy that only improves the longer they're fired. Even from the hip, these colorful killers—often sporting orange and yellow Claptrap-like highlights—hit their intended targets.



LITTLE BUT LETHAL

Pandora's psychotic, stunted, mutant bandits return

While we didn't encounter any vertically challenged attackers during our demo, Gearbox promises new variations of the first game's hell-raising half-pints. Beyond the already revealed Task Masters (who attach dwarfs to their shields to soak up damage), other less-sadistic enemies allow the little guys to sit on their shoulders in a support role.

of the downed Loaders rising from the floor like relentless Terminators.

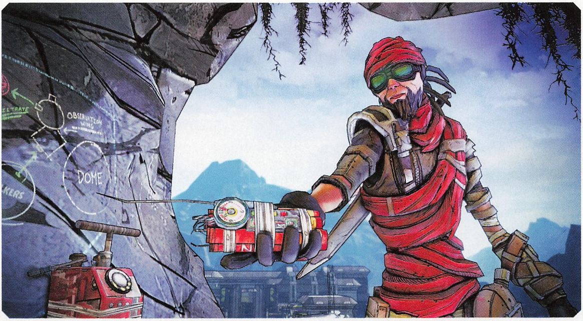
While trying to wrap our noggins around this unexpected twist, we witness flying, drone-like enemies reviving their fallen allies. Dubbed Surveyors, the new aerial adversaries are part of what Gearbox is calling an "enemy ecosystem." As we continue to gape in awe at the resurrected Loaders looking for a rematch, Hellquist casually chimes in with, "Oh yeah, we're trying to make sure the enemy A.I. talk to each other; we want them to understand they're in an urban environment, where the players are, where the higher elevations are...stuff like that. The big push is to make sure they understand where they're interacting, and then who else is with them that's still alive." Of course, Surveyors aren't just a support class; when not healing the Loaders we just emptied all our ammo magazines into, the multi-tasking menaces are able to deflect gunfire and rain electric death down on our heads.

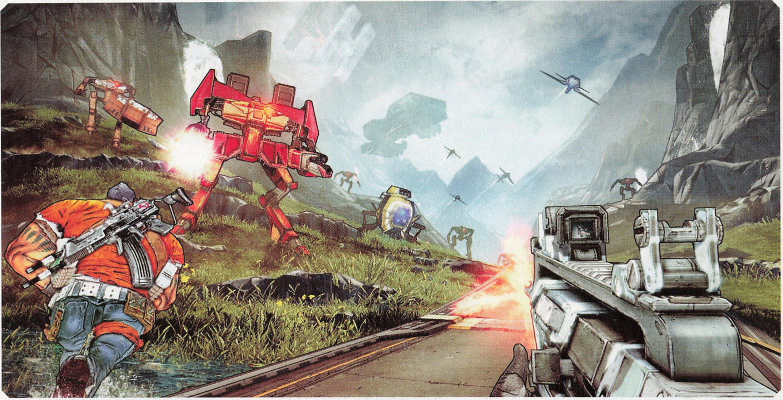
MAD SKILLS

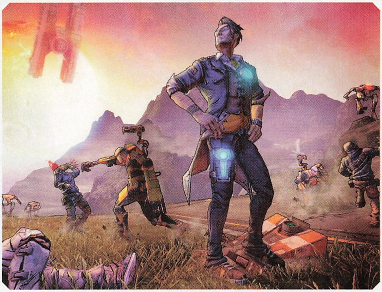
With these new wrinkles worked out, we blast all the Surveyors from the sky, then attempt to teach the Loaders some manners a second time. Exiting the shipyard, an ear-pleasing combo of twisting metal and human screams safely in our wake, we progress outside back toward the preserve. Before we can catch our breath though, a familiar foe races over to greet, er...eat us; coursing with flames, the canine-like Badass Fire Skag looks like last game's fiery furballs, but it becomes readily apparent that these old dogs have been taught some new tricks. Showcasing another example of the title's enemy ecology, the rabid beast summons some surrounding pups before setting them ablaze. Now facing a momma Skag and her lethal litter, we begin wondering what sort of odds-evening skills Salvador possesses.

As in *Borderlands*, each gun-brandishing hero's preferred playstyle is customized and upgraded through three unique skills trees—buffing mostly passive attributes—as well as through a screen-clearing active skill. Where it was often difficult to truly feel the effects of, say, a +1 damage bonus in the first game, Hellquist promises this won't be the case in the sequel. "Skills have been completely redefined...[they're] a lot more intuitive than they've been before." Reiss adds: "We felt our skill trees could do more for differentiating playstyles than they did in the first game. So it's structurally very similar...your actions go at the top and then there are three branches for each character class. But our goal this time is that each of those branches plays very differently than the other two branches within that class."

Punctuating this new playstyle-defining approach is what







Millionaire industrialist, self-declared Pandora dictator, and *Borderlands 2's* main antagonist, Handsome Jack may not have claws, horns, or fangs, but he's easily the meanest son-of-a-b on the planet.

Gearbox calls "game-changers", skills that, when activated, significantly up the ass-kicking ante. Salvador, for example, has one in his Gun Lust tree called Autoloader, allowing him to reload all guns he currently has in his possession but not equipped. While its in-game description gets the job done, Hellquist—suddenly as giddy as a gunslinger who's just looted a shiny new piece—makes it sound infinitely cooler: "It's so fantastic. You shoot with this one, you kill a guy...you just put that away, pull out the next one...it's ready to go...you kill another guy, pull out another one. It's just such a neat flow." These game-changers aren't meant to replace more traditional RPG-flavored upgrades, such as Salvador's "I'm Your Huckleberry" skill, granting him a +5 to damage and reload speed. However, each tree sports two of these table-turners, one in the middle and another at the end, giving us a nice little treat when reaching those milestones.

In addition to skills having a more noticeable impact, a new elemental debuff, called Slag, has joined the enemy-exterminating ranks of incendiary, shock, corrosive, and explosive damage. Hosing an enemy with the disgusting goop has little effect on its own, but pairing it with any of the aforementioned life-siphoners results in a lethal cocktail. The sticky sludge essentially makes the other elementals adhere to targets longer, doubling the amount of damage they'd ordinarily do. Bathing bad guys in the unpleasant mystery substance is especially well complemented by Salvador's dual-wielding active skill; we can first spray our prey with Slag using one gun, then soak them with a second debuff from behind with our other widow-maker. Think of it like tarring and feathering...if the feathers were replaced with face-melting acid.

UNTIL NEXT TIME

Feeling confident about our fresh combat options, we continue to reduce Fire Skags to piles of black ash and even tango with a Badass Pyre Thresher, a massive new monster sporting long tentacles and the ability to burrow beneath the ground. While the squid-like beast puts up one hell of a fight, it seems about as scary as an inchworm next to the Constructor Bot swallowing up the horizon ahead. We're nervous when we witness the hulking robot shoot heat-seeking missiles from its back, while also spitting a trio of piercing lasers from its front; our cautious apprehension turns to stone-cold fear, however, when we discover it also possesses the ability to spawn Loader Bots. Sitting in on our demo, Gearbox product manager Adam Fletcher sums up the new threat best: "Yeah, he's an a—hole."

Perhaps a blessing in disguise, our demo concludes just as the bot-building behemoth is about to turn us into a permanent part of Pandora's landscape. That said, we can't wait for the first chance we get to crush that sucker like an empty beer can. Based on our brief time in Pandora, though, it looks like we've got lots more to look forward to than simply introducing bandits, beasts, and bots to the business end of our gajillion guns. If Gearbox can deliver on their numerous gameplay, narrative, and presentational promises, then re-opening Pandora's box should yield the best loot of all.

NEXT ON VI

SONY
5
Group Messaging
Trophies
Mus
Browser
SELECT
START

Vita's first wave of games only hinted at its potential. Here are 22 exciting new titles that shape its future.

Vita's launch could have gone smoother—due in part to the economic slowdown and the delayed western release—but its sturdy, multi-function hardware and impressive launch line-up is silencing the doubters. Better yet, the second wave of Vita games is even more promising, with more to follow at E3. Here are Vita's key releases over the next six months and beyond, plus devs offer insight on Vita's future.

01

STREET FIGHTER X TEKKEN

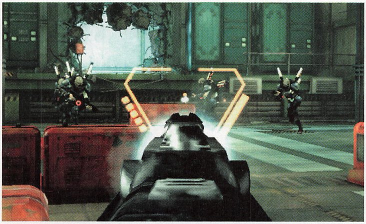
Pub **Capcom** Dev **Capcom**
ETA **Fall**

Capcom's handheld port of their recently released tag team fighter hits Vita a little late, but ships with a bunch of exclusive characters that Capcom won't unlock on PS3 until after the Vita version ships. It may be a challenge playing *SF X Tekken* with Vita's D-pad, but it's a great place to practice our best slugging moves when we're away from our trusty arcade fightstick.

02 RESISTANCE: BURNING SKIES

Pub **SCEA** Dev **Nihilistic** ETA **June**

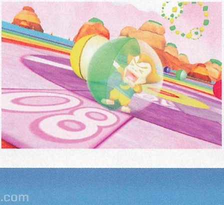
Insomniac is done with *Resistance*, but Sony just couldn't let it lie. *Burning Skies* is the world's first dual-analog FPS on a handheld—a proper big console experience in our hands, with a new hero and a new fight amid the ruins of 1951's Chimera-occupied New York City, which is some years before *Resistance 3's* liberation.



03 SUPER MONKEY BALL BANANA SPLITZ

Pub **Sega** Dev **Sega** ETA **Summer**

Unstoppable and eternal, *Monkey Ball* goes wherever there's hardware able to run it. On Game Boy Advance, iPhone, N-Gage and now Vita, it's the same old game, but no less addictive than it was in the GameCube days. Vita's twist is its ability to generate levels based on photographs—snap the cat, get a cat-shaped stage.



04 METAL GEAR SOLID HD

Pub **Konami** Dev **Kojima/Bluepoint**
ETA June **2012**

Peace Walker went walkabout somewhere between the PS3 and Vita releases of the *MGS HD Collection*, but Vita gets PS3-perfect ports of *MGS2* and *3* with optional touchscreen controls and new dialogue from the original voice actors. Saves are "Transfarrable" between PS3 and Vita, too, so you can spend an hour fighting The End in a more comfortable chair before taking the rest of the game on the road.

05 PERSONA 4: THE GOLDEN

Pub **Atlus** Dev **Atlus** ETA **Winter**

Half dungeon crawler and half lifestyle simulator, *Persona 4* sees us juggle girlfriends and schoolwork by day, then fight off demons in an alternate reality by night. Even on PS2 it was one of the best RPGs ever made, and PS Vita's Golden version gets new characters, new stories, and an all-new online mode.

06 MORTAL KOMBAT

Pub **Warner Bros. Interactive**
Dev **NetherRealm** ETA **Summer**

2011's *Mortal Kombat* revival hits Vita with DLC characters Skarlet, Kenshi, Rain, and Freddy freakin' Krueger available alongside deicidal PS3-exclusive god-stabber Kratos right from the start. That's five extra ways to offend old ladies on our morning bus ride to daily drudgery, and we'll get all the downloadable costumes and Fatalities too.

07 PHANTASY STAR ONLINE 2

Pub **Sega** Dev **Sonic Team** ETA **TBD 2013**

Twelve years in the making, Sega's sequel to their classic Dreamcast RPG is Vita's biggest online game. *PSO2* supports hundreds of players in its massively multiplayer lobbies, and up to 12 players at a time in the instanced dungeons, where PC and Vita players can level up side by side and even play the same character across both platforms.

Developers on Vita

The biggest devs in the business on why Vita is the future, and what it needs to get there

"It's the pinnacle of current gaming technology," says *Metal Gear* creator **Hideo Kojima**; "having that in the palm of your hand is really exciting." And it is. Vita has more power than any handheld device this side of the iPad, but with the inputs iOS games have to do without.

"It has dual analog sticks!" says Irrational boss **Ken Levine**. "You can finally play a shooter—a real shooter—on a handheld. Seriously, that's a hole in my soul right now. It's awesome."

"I think what we do would work very well on a Vita," says *Heavy Rain* creator **David Cage**. "It could be shorter and episodic, something that you'd just play for 10 minutes. The narrative form would work on a Vita, it would work on a PS3. Stories are universal. Everybody's excited by a story: if it is good and the characters are compelling, you don't care what platform it runs on."

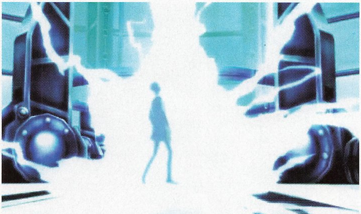
"Everyone agrees Vita is an impressive piece of tech, but *Resident Evil* creator **Shinji Mikami** has seen impressive tech before. For him, Vita faces bigger challenges. "Simply put, there aren't enough good games for it yet. Also, I think the price may be too high. We spend so much money and time on our smartphones these days, and the sort of person who would buy a Vita will likely have a smartphone too. The people who have bought a Vita though seem to be devoting a lot of time to it, but it needs to be cheaper to appeal to the general public. Once there are more great games it should do well."

08

LITTLEBIGPLANET

Pub **SCEA** Dev **Double Eleven** ETA **June**

LittleBigPlanet 2's editing tools were comprehensive but fiddly to use with analog sticks and buttons. On Vita those same tools all work with touchscreen controls—all we need to do is tap the screen to build levels in minutes. Lousy levels, maybe, but grab the best of the talented community's punter-created levels over 3G or Wi-Fi and we'll be fine.



09 TIME TRAVELERS

Pub **TBD** Dev **Level-5** ETA **TBD 2013**

Level 5's baffling sci-fi adventure plays out over a single day in 2031, 18 years after a mysterious event leveled most of Tokyo. It's a digital choose-your-own adventure book of sorts, loaded with some pretty heavy moral dilemmas and game-changing choices, and all made by a team who very rarely make bad games.

10 MADDEN NFL 13

Pub **EA Sports** Dev **Tiburon** ETA **August**

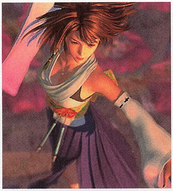
Just like *FIFA*, *Madden's* annual PSP port was always several steps behind the console versions, but Vita's *FIFA 12* proved EA is taking handhelds seriously. *Madden 13* will be the first EA Sports game to hit shelves on the same day and with the same features as the console version. And those "other" football fans needn't fret, *FIFA 13* will follow shortly afterward.

11

KILLZONE

Pub **SCEA** Dev **Sony Cambridge**
ETA **TBD 2013**

Killzone joins *Uncharted*, *LittleBigPlanet*, and *Resistance* as yet another PS3 series franchised out to one of Sony's smaller studios in the rush to bring its PS3 IP to Vita. Right or wrong, *Killzone* may be the lowest-profile title among Sony's big hitters, and the Vita version could be one small studio's chance to outdo the big boys behind *Killzone 3*. It's worth keeping an eye on this one.



12 FINAL FANTASY X HD

Pub **Square Enix** Dev **Square Enix**
ETA **TBD**

Another remastered classic for both PS3 and Vita, *Final Fantasy X* was the first of PS2's *Final Fantasy* games when it was released over 11 years ago. It's always nice when a fan-favorite gets the HD treatment, and a success here might open the doors for the genre-smashing *Final Fantasy XII* to come next. Let's hope that they're not just teasing us with the idea.

13 RUGBY CHALLENGE

Pub **TBD** Dev **Sidhe Interactive**
ETA **TBD**

There's a chance this one never makes it to the U.S., but hardcore sports fans never say never. On home consoles, rugby games are at least a generation behind the likes of *FIFA*, so hopefully Vita's dev-friendly tech will level the playing field. Best-case scenario—we get a hybrid game/management sim. Worst case—a straight port of the so-so PS3 version.

14 DUST 514

Pub **SCEA** Dev **CCP Games**
ETA **Summer**

Vita's *DUST 514* app leeches data from PS3's free-to-play *DUST* shooter, which connects directly to the massively multiplayer universe of *EVE Online* over on PC, and pushes *EVE* one step closer to becoming an Icelandic version of the Matrix inside which we can live our entire lives. See page 65 for more info on the app.

15 NEW LITTLE KING'S STORY

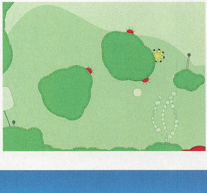
Pub **Konami** Dev **Marvelous**
ETA **TBD**

Yoshiro Kimura's oddball rule-'em-up sold about seven copies on Wii, but made all seven owners extraordinarily happy. Vita's "reimagining" retains the charming core—invade rival kingdoms by lobbing loyal subjects in *Pikmin*-like combat—and expands it with new challenges, including demonic cows. Moo-ha-ha-ha...

16 SOUND SHAPES

Pub **SCEA** Dev **Queasy Games** ETA **TBD**

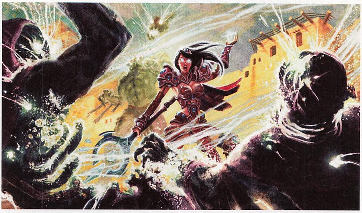
Jonathan Mak's first game since *Everyday Shooter* is part musical instrument and part side-scrolling platformer, generating levels based on music, and music based on how we play through the game's levels. Deadmau5 is on board for the soundtrack, but we can create levels based on our own tunes, and we can *definitely* do better than *him*.



17 WARRIOR'S LAIR

Pub **SCEA** Dev **San Diego Studio** ETA **TBD**

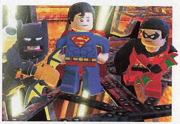
Originally announced as *Ruin* at Vita's E3 debut, Sony's homemade dungeon crawler is compatible with both PS3 and Vita. On either platform we can build our own dungeon and let other online players go questing in it. Better still, we can go out harvesting loot from their bodies when they're smashed by our traps and monsters. That's a win-win.



18 KEIJI INAFUNE PROJECT

Pub **TBD** Dev **Comcept**
ETA **TBD 2013**

Capcom's Keiji Inafune bailed out of the company after 23 years to start his own company, complaining that everyone in Japan is making "awful games" and then later that "Japan is dead". Inafune announced his new (as yet untitled) Vita game at March's Game Developers Conference, and if it isn't good he'll have the entire Japanese games industry ready to kick his face off.



19 LEGO BATMAN 2: DC SUPER HEROES

Pub **Ubisoft** Dev **Traveller's Tales**
ETA **June**

Batman meets Wonder Woman, Green Lantern, Superman, and the rest of DC's super heroes in a semi-open Gotham City for the biggest *LEGO* game yet on the smallest gaming device capable of doing it justice. We'll have a proper preview of the Vita version soon, but for now we hear that Superman might be "overpowered". Surprise!

20

CALL OF DUTY

Pub **Activision** Dev **Treyarch (probably)** ETA **TBD**

Announced at Sony's E3 2011 conference, *Call of Duty* on Vita borders on myth. Even Activision employees claim to know little about it. When it arrives, it'll probably be handled by Treyarch's Wii "porting" team, since Wii U should be able to run the regular *Black Ops 2*. Multiplayer is likely Wi-Fi only—since 3G is too slow—but we wouldn't rule out integrated PS3/Vita profiles and COD Elite compatibility. Get this right, and it could be Vita's biggest system seller.

21 ZONE OF THE ENDERS HD

Pub **Konami** Dev **Kojima/Bluepoint** ETA **Late 2012**

Hideo Kojima's ancient mech game sold thanks to its added *Metal Gear Solid 2* demo, but enough people bothered to put *ZOE* in their PS2 for the game to get a sequel, a Game Boy Advance spinoff, and an animated TV series. *ZOE 1* and *2* are coming to PS3 and Vita later this year, and like *MGS HD* we can play both with a "Transfarred" save file.

22 BIOSHOCK

Pub **2K Games** Dev **Irrational**
ETA **The distant future**

Irrational's Ken Levine says he'd prefer to show *BioShock* on Vita rather than just tell us about it, but that might take a while since Irrational has shown few signs of progress on the Vita-exclusive spinoff in the year since its announcement. *BioShock* could become a repeat of *Gran Turismo's* PSP story—announced too early, developed too slow, available too late. Is that the cue for a big E3 reveal?

PROTECTING OUR RACE

How well is Vita selling?

Vita's launch was broadly successful, but bigger challenges lay ahead

Sony was celebrating 1.2 million Vitas sold after 10 weeks on sale in Japan and just a week on sale in the U.S. and Europe, but it's a misleading statistic. Sony isn't lying, but they're talking global figures.

In contrast, when Sony released PS3 they celebrated its sales in Japan, America, and Europe with separate figures. But in the absence of big multiplayer-friendly PSP franchises—*Phantasy Star*, *Monster Hunter*, or *Metal Gear*—uptake has been slow in their home territory. Vita has sold very similar numbers to 3DS on its launch last year, and at a much higher price. Look at western sales, and it's clear Vita's success is being driven by *Uncharted: Golden Abyss* and *FIFA Soccer*.

3DS struggled for its first few months but it had a killer December in Japan thanks to Capcom's *Monster Hunter 3*, and a killer Christmas in the west thanks to *Mario Kart 7* and *Super Mario 3D Land*.

> **"It's still games that sell machines, and Vita needs some big ones."**

Despite the rush to turn handhelds and consoles into multimedia platforms it's still games that sell machines, and Vita needs some killer-apps. When Capcom releases their next *Monster Hunter* on 3DS later this year it will propel Japanese 3DS sales through the roof. It's nearly essential that Sony steal their biggest franchise back and bring *Monster Hunter Portable 4* to Vita.

The chance to play *Call of Duty* anywhere is almost as irresistible here in the west as playing *Monster Hunter* is in Japan, but when the majority of *COD* players are happy to play just one game a year, will they pick up new hardware to play that same game on the go? There's a clear route to victory in Japan, but breaking into the mainstream in the west is a nut Sony still needs to crack.

SONY
PS VITA

WHEN WORLDS COLLIDE

Free-to-play PS3 shooter **DUST 514** sets to invade PC MMO **EVE Online**. It's the end of the universe as we know it. **BY ANDREW HAYWARD**

Things aren't going as planned. Twenty-four of our best corporate mercenaries are up against an equal-sized opposing force, attempting to take the imposing structure they call home; but progress is about as scarce as our dwindling resources. Luckily, one last Hail Mary play remains: the Orbital Bombardment. We send the signal and within moments, a series of laser blasts erupts down from space, eradicating nearly everything in sight.

It's a sight to behold, and a monumental advantage—but that attack wasn't simply an automated feature granted for amassing kills or experience. Sitting on the other end of that request was an actual human player logged into *EVE Online* on their computer, pressing the button to send hell raining down to earth. This is *DUST 514*. Welcome to the next evolution of console shooters.

DUST 514 comes with a variety of features that distinguish the sci-fi shooter from the typical AAA online affair, but two main hooks really make it stand out. First is that the downloadable game is fully playable without paying a cent. Icelandic developer CCP Games says the game will support itself via a wide array of optional microtransactions, which lets more devoted players further customize their appearance and weapons, but stresses that it's not a "pay-to-win" experience.

Second (and perhaps more notably), *DUST 514* isn't a mere *EVE Online* spinoff—the hardcore online spaceship shooter for PC and Mac that has continually grown its subscriber base for *nine* full years. It exists within the exact same code base using identical communication tools, letting users interact with each other in meaningful ways, such as calling down aforementioned strikes from space and waging ground-based battle to claim territories for their shared corporate alliances.

It's a wild new frontier for online experiences, making *DUST 514* perhaps the first console game to warrant the MMOFPS tag—that's massively multiplayer online first-person shooter. But players who don't care about the deeper narrative threads or battle for resources and galactic domination don't need to worry about investing considerable time or attention into such things. At its core, this is still a game about blasting enemies to bits and completing brief objectives on the battlefield; plenty of reason to dive in even if that's all that's desired.

A New Frontier

DUST 514 is a structurally distinct shooter experience. Rather than jump into a random quick match, we take on contracts—many game generated, but others offered by player-controlled corporations—that offer economic benefit and will eventually tie into the territorial conquest elements coming after launch. Upon completion of a battle's objectives, the winning team earns a share of the bounty, and the game's primary currency of ISK flows freely between *DUST* and *EVE*, and can be used to purchase or create items in the universe.

Weapons and items are finite resources, and while developer CCP isn't ready to disclose the full extent of the looting system, we will be able to claim items from fallen foes on the battlefield, and player-owned weapons can be taken or destroyed. Common items are sold in large bunches and can be easily replenished, so losing a few in battle isn't a big deal—but rare and powerful items are a commodity and can command high prices. Plus, some items will only be sold for a short period of time, making them even more coveted and harder to come by.

RARE AND POWERFUL ITEMS ARE A COMMODITY AND COMMAND HIGH PRICES

In addition to ISK, which is earned through battle, *DUST 514* utilizes Aurum, which is premium currency purchased with actual money and used to customize players' appearance and purchase items within the world. CCP claims that no real competitive advantage is earned by spending money in the game, and we'll only be able to buy items and weapons available to our level—which can still only be earned through hard-fought combat. Images of *Farmville* with firearms appear cast aside, as this is a free-to-play game that aims to stay compelling for all.

What the free-to-play approach seems to do is make the game more player-centric in a persistent manner. It's not about joining a random match and having firearms designated by the server, or jumping into whichever vehicles were found at the start of the round. Whatever weapons, armor, and vehicles owned by players are available on every single map.

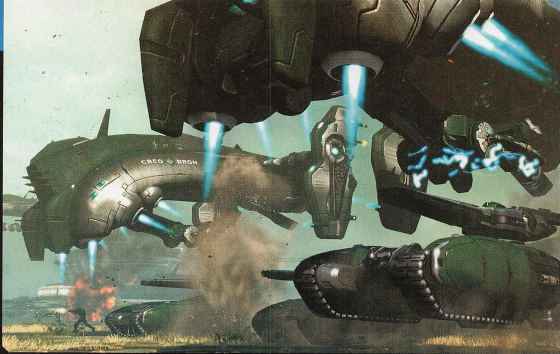
DUST ON VITA

Even more power in our hands

Complementing the PS3 release of *DUST 514* will be a Vita companion app tentatively titled DUST 514: Neocom, which will allow us to access an array of ancillary information to help prepare for battle when we're not sitting in front of a television.

With Neocom, we'll be able to communicate with allies, browse the item marketplace, customize our personal and vehicle loadouts, and study recent matches by corporations—even ones we didn't play in. It's similar in some respects to what Activision has done with Call of Duty Elite, but Neocom's level heat maps will be viewable in 3D, adding an extra dimension to the available information.

Why release a companion app instead of bringing the full *DUST 514* experience to Vita? "It almost feels redundant to start porting *DUST* to Vita," asserts creative director Atli Már Sveinsson. "We'd rather players use Vita to complement the game—to use it in a different setting, on the subway or a bus or wherever."



The large hovercraft we customized between rounds to feature machine gun and rocket launcher turrets can be dropped into any conflict at a touch of the D-pad, as can a tweaked tank or gun-mounted utility vehicle, and players have similar control over which weapons and offensive/defensive abilities are mapped to their character. Picking and developing a player class is key, thanks to skills that can take years to fully unlock, though we can swap between roles upon each respawn during battle.

On the surface, *DUST 514* tries to make the experience unique to each user, but the underlying objective is to band together in corporations to fight for the fate of the universe. That's where the connection to *EVE Online* becomes much more clear.

Contact and Conquest

DUST 514 has its simpler objective-based and team deathmatch battles, but Conquest is considered the primary game mode. It's where the experience takes the form of a sandbox, and lets us work with *EVE Online* counterparts to further the interests of corporations and enact persistent change via combat.

THE CORE OBJECTIVE? TO WIPE OUT THE ENEMY OR CRIPPLE THEM ECONOMICALLY

Up to 48 players can fill the mighty maps—which can measure five square kilometers—engaging in team-based combat with the goal of dominating each area of a planet. One player on each side takes the role of commander, floating over the battlefield in a real-time strategy-esque fashion and installing structures like turrets and generators, placing spawn points on the terrain, and sending needed info and orders to allies. The core objective? To wipe out the enemy or cripple them economically. It's a battle of attrition each and every time.

It's in this mode that *EVE Online* players can

be called upon to assist, and CCP says that the Orbital Bombardment is only a mid-range attack; there will be smaller, less dramatic ones, though even more powerful options will follow. But communication is key here. An allied *EVE Online* player must be available to pull the trigger on the assault, based on our coordinates, but they may also choose not to respond or follow through on the request. Nothing is predictable or guaranteed. There's an element of trust needed, but that only ties further into the overall theme of shared interests and planetary conquest.

Dominating planets is key to the *EVE Online* experience, and it will be key in *DUST* as well. In Conquest, corporate alliances aim to take over each sector of a planet, and once accomplished, the alliance can place a space elevator over the planet and begin pulling resources from it. Doing so gives its members more currency for weapons and strengthens the alliance's future war efforts, and the results persist until a rival faction successfully takes hold.

Territorial combat won't be included in *DUST 514* when it launches this summer, but when it's activated in the fall, it'll be the connection that aligns these two disparate titles in a surprising manner. Corporations will exist in both titles and feature members from both, who can focus their efforts on different aspects to work toward the same goal: galactic supremacy. With a shared economy and user base, what happens in *DUST* will strongly affect *EVE* and vice versa, leading to an unpredictable type of conflict that we haven't seen before on a home console system.

Constant Disruption

What's most notable is that *DUST 514* promises to be an ever-evolving affair.

Following the addition of the territorial warfare in Conquest later this year, CCP has already detailed a number of changes and enhancements—all of which will be free to us, as the studio is unwilling to split access between the wider player base and those willing to continually pump money into the game.

Included in the plans are walking mech suits, plus Agent missions, in which we can battle NPC characters on their own or team up for co-op missions. Even more startling is the possibility of adding non-temperate planets, such as gaseous or lava-filled areas, in which on-foot combat would be replaced by vehicle-centric action. Imagine that: an absolute sea change of an addition, completely free of charge, and something that only further expands the *DUST* and *EVE* connection.

And it doesn't stop at 48 players per match. While no timetable has been set, CCP is actively testing with 128 players, and has experimented with uncapped player counts, with upgrades set to arrive as the servers prove able to handle the added stress. *DUST 514*, as it's configured at launch, may end up being a wildly different experience a year or two down the line. But considering the fascinating universe it's tapping into and the impressive goals set forth, we can't imagine being anything but along for the ride.

EVERLASTING EVE

PC gaming's most successful persistent universe

Launched on PC in May 2003, *EVE Online* may not have the name recognition of *World of Warcraft* or other top massively multiplayer titles, but it's actually the only online game that has grown its subscriber base year after year. As it stands, nine years later, the game boasts more than 400,000 paying users.

EVE Online is primarily a spaceship shooter, where users customize ships to engage in interstellar combat, but its sandbox approach has led to much more interesting action within its universe. Player-run corporations team up in alliances to dominate large sections of the galaxy, using their power and influence to amass resources and attempt to stay in power. *EVE's* long history is marked by fascinating instances of mass combat and sabotage, but also real-life strain.

Last year, players revolted when CCP attempted to add extravagant microtransactions to the game, going so far as to congregate en masse and crash servers. Admitting mistakes, the developer flew player-appointed Council of Stellar Management members to Iceland to discuss the future of *EVE* and work through the issues. Since then, *EVE Online* has refocused on its core combat while gearing up for the launch of *DUST 514*.

REVOLUTIONARY ROADMAP

Creative director Atli Már Sveinsson taps into DUST 514's history—and its future

“CONSOLE GAMES HAVE TURNED A LITTLE TOO CASUAL.” *–Sveinsson*

Why did a first-person shooter seem like the next step in building out *EVE Online*'s universe?
We thought about many different genres. Should we do real-time strategy? Should we do something casual, or even more different than that? We all love first-person shooters, and we always came back to that and the fact that people love shooting each other in the face. Since *EVE* is hyper-capitalistic, and about territorial conquest and the economy involved, doing something casual wouldn't really fit in that world. It has to have violence. It felt like an FPS would both reach the broadest community and also add in something that—when it comes to the verisimilitude of the world—is missing. Before, in *EVE Online*, you only had spaceship combat. But what happens on the planets? There must be some fighting. Why don't we take a peek into that and allow players to experience it?

Why was PS3 the best fit, especially when *EVE* is on PC?
It's part that we don't want to draw from our PC title by adding in an almost-competing title, and also because trying to build an FPS inside *EVE* isn't very realistic. But also, a small part of it is to show the world how to do an MMO on a console. The console base is massive, and it is an excellent platform for first-person shooters.

I view it personally that consoles really need a game like this. Console games have turned a little too casual; being led through the experience too much, as opposed to the old days when we were playing *Quake* and *Half-Life*—more fun, in my opinion. But yeah, it's to tap into an awesome community and to play to a platform's strength, and not to start out by blurring the lines between our PC space MMO and an FPS.

How did you decide on the free-to-play model?
First and foremost, it makes the most sense for *DUST*, partly because it allows us to reach more people—but also because of the nature of the game, and our philosophy when it comes to expansions and so on. We feel that it offers a better experience. It's better to have more people for the game world, and we kind of graduated from our old model, which was having an admission fee. It just stopped making sense over time. At one point we just came to a conclusion that we were comfortable with doing so, and with bringing it to PlayStation, Sony has had a huge part in defining this with us. It's something I think the other console manufacturers are not as forward thinking on. We think this is the way forward.

"THE COMMUNITY IS THE BEST RESOURCE WE HAVE."

As with *EVE*, you want the *DUST* community to shape its direction and have a free-flowing economy. How do you see that unfolding?
We have a fantastic relationship with Sony—they see the world in the same color as us. So when it comes to anything that you've seen in console gaming before, we are breaking the mold with that. It is a completely different approach. All of our content packs are free because we want people to be engaging in the same planets and such, and we're not going to segment the community.

I think it will unfold much quicker than people initially think, even within the *EVE* community. They're going to see huge value in integrating with the *DUST* guys. I believe that, and we at CCP all believe that. We have a roadmap that extends a couple of years ahead, and some of those features that we have on the roadmap are actually done. It's challenging enough to make an accessible, good shooter, but to make one that lets you peel the layers of the onion and expose yourself to more depth and meaning... We just have to be very conscious and do it right, and involve the community. It's the best resource we have, to allow them to shape the world. We don't pretend to know everything.

TEN MUST-PLAY PS3 CO-OP GAMES

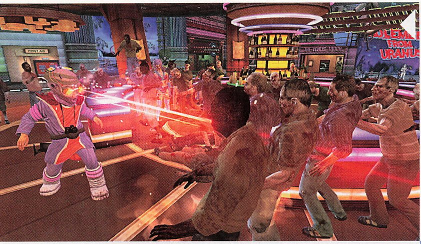
FUN!
Start
me.
play.
my levels
my objects
my photos
my sounds

1

LITTLEBIGPLANET 2

Pub > SCEA **Dev** > Media Molecule **Released** > January 2011
Offline Co-op > 4 **Online Co-op** > 4

What is it? Build your own fun...
Yeah, we've seen co-op platformers before, but none let us build the level as we play through. That's the true beauty of *LBP2*—we can make things with friends, from whole levels to little items that we can share and merrily dot through our own, private creations. Be warned: there's always one creative deadweight who just plasters everything in stickers. Er, thanks.



2

DEAD RISING 2: OFF THE RECORD

Pub > Capcom **Dev** > Blue Castle **Released** > January 2011
Offline Co-op > None **Online Co-op** > 2

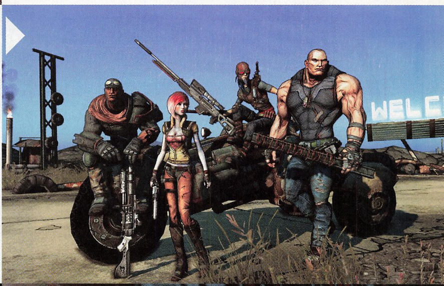
What is it? All the zombies!
It's as rudimentary as co-op gets, and it really shouldn't be all that compelling. But that mob of zombies we shredded with a lawn trimmer and that our buddy finished off with an axe say otherwise.

3

BORDERLANDS

Pub > 2K Games **Dev** > Gearbox **Released** > October 2009
Offline Co-op > 2 **Online Co-op** > 4

What is it? Four-player cel-shaded looting and shooting in alien badlands
Like *Diablo* or *Phantasy Star Online*, *Borderlands* is about accumulating disgustingly powerful gear and adorning our characters with weapons and armor so massive that everyone we meet reels in awe.

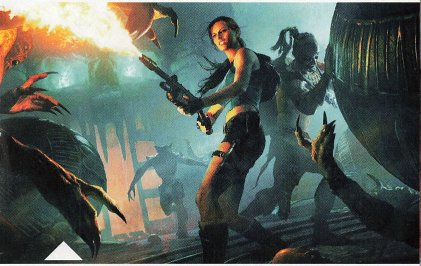


4

SAINTS ROW: THE THIRD

Pub > THQ **Dev** > Volition **Released** > November 2011
Offline Co-op > None **Online Co-op** > 2

What is it? Batshit insane
No other PS3 game lets us and a friend lay waste to an entire city from the seat of a hoverbike—while dressed like the two campiest Village People. You want more than that? You're asking too much.

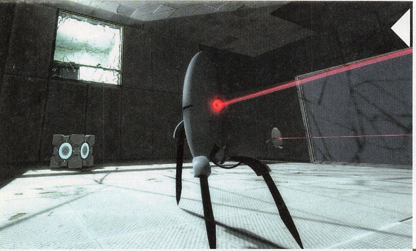


5

LARA CROFT AND THE GUARDIAN OF LIGHT

Pub > Square Enix **Dev** > Crystal Dynamics **Released** > September 2010
Offline Co-op > 2 **Online Co-op** > 2

What is it? True cooperation in a tiny vest
Lara gets the crappiest co-op partner imaginable in instantly forgettable Mayan warrior Totec. But Crystal Dynamics more than makes up for that by handing us clever co-op actions that can make total strangers play like friends.



6

PORTAL 2

Pub > Valve **Dev** > Valve **Released** > April 2011
Offline Co-op > 2 **Online Co-op** > 2

What is it? Cooperative puzzles deep in the heart of the Aperture Science facility

Part videogame, part cruel psychological experiment, *Portal 2's* dedicated co-op campaign will very quickly test even the closest of friendships. Seeing a solution is only half the problem; working together is for the patient and forgiving.

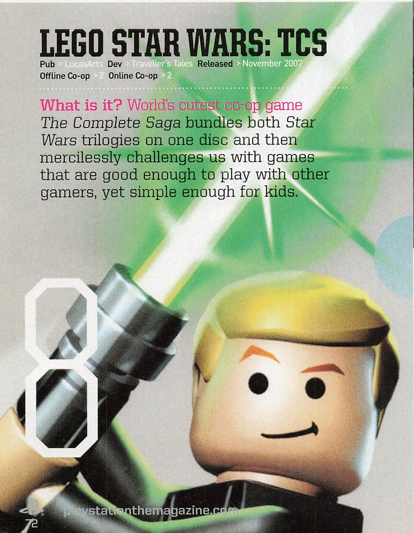
7

NINJA GAIDEN SIGMA 2

Pub > Tecmo **Dev** > Team Ninja **Released** > September 2009
Offline Co-op > None **Online Co-op** > 2

What is it? Fighting to keep ourself, and our closest buddy, alive...

Built for punishment, not pleasure, *Sigma 2's* Team Missions double our chance of defeat by tying our fate to a second player. When one player dies, everyone dies, so it's only the strongest friendships that survive a dozen rounds of co-op *Ninja Gaiden*.



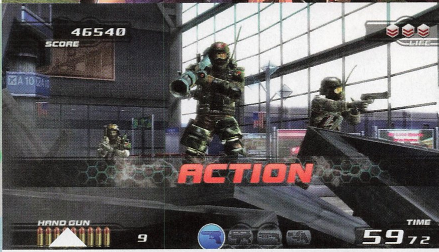
8

LEGO STAR WARS: TCS

Pub > LucasArts **Dev** > Traveller's Tales **Released** > November 2007
Offline Co-op > 2 **Online Co-op** > 2

What is it? World's cutest co-op game

The Complete Saga bundles both *Star Wars* trilogies on one disc and then mercilessly challenges us with games that are good enough to play with other gamers, yet simple enough for kids.



9

TIME CRISIS: RS

Pub > Namco Bandai **Dev** > Namco Bandai **Released** > October 2010
Offline Co-op > 2 **Online Co-op** > None

What is it? Relentlessly shooting baddies

Grab a Move and *Razing Storm* and suddenly we're 11 years old again, standing shoulder-to-shoulder with our best friend in some bowling alley arcade and pumping round after round into an endless stream of heavily armed bastards.

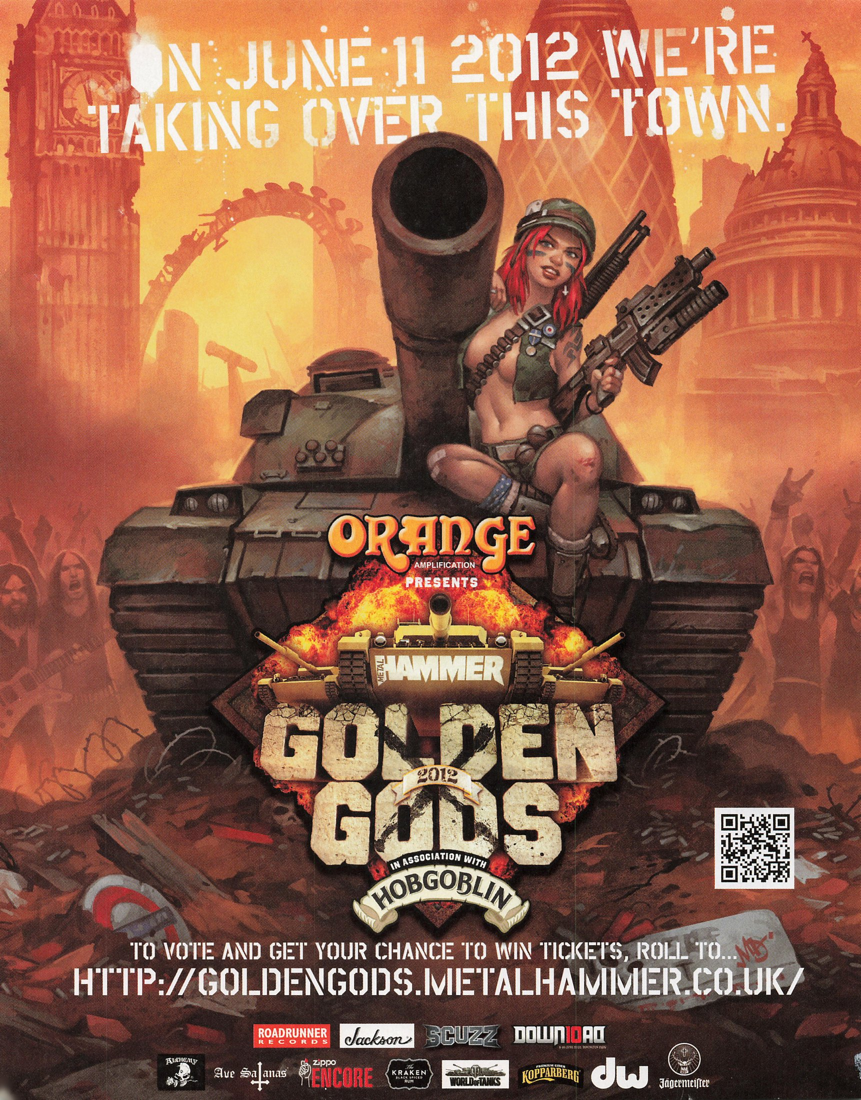
10

RESISTANCE 3

Pub > SCEA **Dev** > Insomniac **Released** > September 2011
Offline Co-op > 2 **Online Co-op** > 2

What is it? Teaming up to survive the horror

The best *Resistance* game actually has the smallest co-op mode. *Resistance 3* is a great story made even better by the presence of a good friend. It's loaded with set-pieces where an extra pair of hands gives us a massive tactical advantage.



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PlayStation® The Official Magazine

Reviews

Your essential guide to new releases

Look into any gamer's collection and chances are you won't just find one genre. True, you may find a specific type of game makes up the majority of their collection but there will always be a variety. We like to have choices when it comes to what we want to play and this month's reviews cover just about every game type.

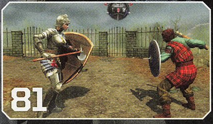
From *Disgaea 3: Absence of Detention* (a zany turn-based JRPG) to *Yakuza: Dead Souls* (a zombie-infested look into the lives of Japan's seedy underworld), games present gamers with an option for every mood.

Sometimes all we want to do is watch blood spraying our screen while we hack away at some idiot standing between us and the end of the game. Other times, we want to be able to sit down with our families and play something perhaps a little less...intense.

In the wide world of videogames, we will always have choice. If it ever seems like only one type of game is coming out, it's just because we're not looking hard enough. Let's step away from hardcore FPSs for just a moment and see what alternate play opportunities are available this month.

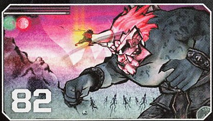
I AM ALIVE

It's a cruel world out there. Survival is exhausting and if we're not careful that exhaustion could kill us...or at least kill our desire to keep playing *I Am Alive*.



DEADLIEST WARRIOR: ANCIENT COMBAT

We always thought we wanted to watch a gladiator fight a ninja until we actually watched a gladiator fight a ninja.



SUMIONI: DEMON ARTS

Sumioni is pretty, but... What we thought might be a fun, artsy, innovative Vita game had us rubbing our touchscreen over and over again instead. Lather, rinse, and repeat.

How we score our reviews...

10 Awesome Instant classic that's nearly PlayStation perfection.

9 Excellent Highly recommended and a great investment.

8 Great Wonderful yet possesses minor flaws.

7 Good Enjoyable but with definite room for improvement.

6 Acceptable A decent offering, but one that only satisfies in places.

5 Mediocre A game that's both fun and frustrating in equal measure.

4 Flawed Too flawed to be anything more than a curiosity.

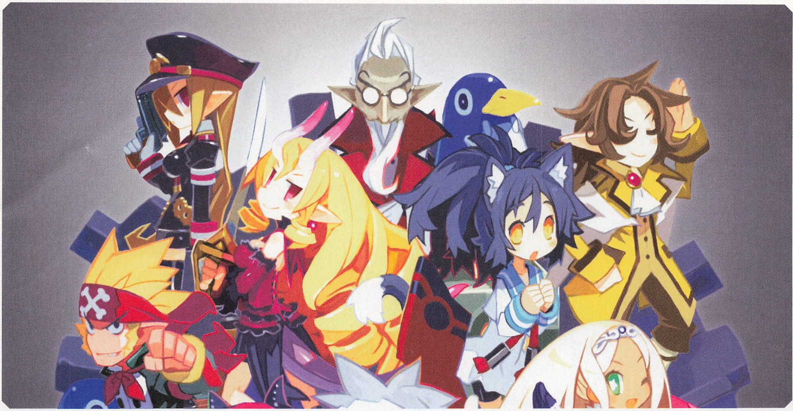
3 Poor A seriously defective game with no long-term appeal.

2 Awful A disgrace to the bargain bin. Avoid it like the plague.

1 Raw Sewage Apparently, feces *can* be pressed on a disc.

GOLD AWARD PlayStation The Official Magazine

Our Highest Accolade The gold award is presented to any game that we feel demonstrates significant innovation, near-flawless gameplay, great graphics, and profound appeal.



Disgaea 3 Absence of Detention

Satisfying obsessive-compulsive needs on the go

Info

Format PS Vita
Pub NIS America
Dev Nippon Ichi Software
Price $39.99
ESRB Teen
It's like *Disgaea 3* as we should of had it on PS3.

Nippon Ichi Software made the right choice in picking *Disgaea 3* for its first PS Vita game. *Disgaea 4* may be the latest in the series, but part three is the one that actually needed a remake.

The original version, subtitled *Absence of Justice*, hit PS3 in 2008. It was the product of an awkward transition between two console generations. *Disgaea 3's* visual quality made it seem as if the game had started life as one last PS2 project, then jumped to the PS3 late in the running when retailers decided that PS2 titles weren't allowed to sell for full price or get decent shelf space anymore. Parts of the graphical package looked pretty good in high definition, and then other parts—especially the backgrounds and some of the sprite artwork—didn't.

Rebuilt for PS Vita's screen, *Disgaea 3* has the sharp, clean, uniform look it was missing four years ago. The backgrounds still aren't incredibly detailed, but they look of a piece with the characters and objects that live in them. All the splashy animated character art in the cinematics is huge and looks beautiful. Just as in *Disgaea 4*, the option exists to turn the sprite anti-aliasing on and off, so old-school types can admire every jagged little detail of the pixel art.

Hell is Crowded

Long story short, it looks good, and it plays like... Well, this is *Disgaea* all right. As most gamers know by now, it's a strategy-RPG for the people who like to break strategy-RPGs. It's a game designed to be ripped apart, exploited, and abused—where unhealthy obsessive power-grinding is the point of the exercise, not an aberration. It's great fun, in other words—provided you subscribe to Nippon Ichi's uniquely perverse definition of "fun."

Dedicated series followers may miss some of the features introduced in *Disgaea 4* last year, like player-vs.-player campaigning on the pirate ship.

Five Signs That you're developing a Disgaea addiction

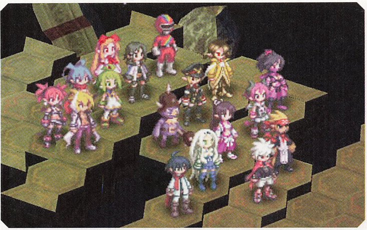
1 **Party Stacking**
Mildly Obsessive
Mastering the art of building towers of characters to toss each other all over the map.

2 **Bonus Perfection**
Moderately Obsessive
Replaying levels until the bonus meter's maxed and every item is secured.

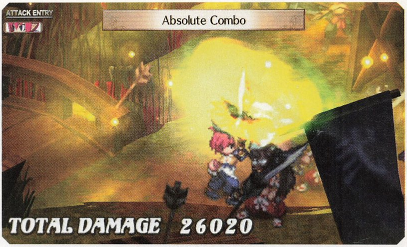
3 **Item Worlding**
Severely Obsessive
Digging through randomly generated dungeons in order to power up equipment and characters.

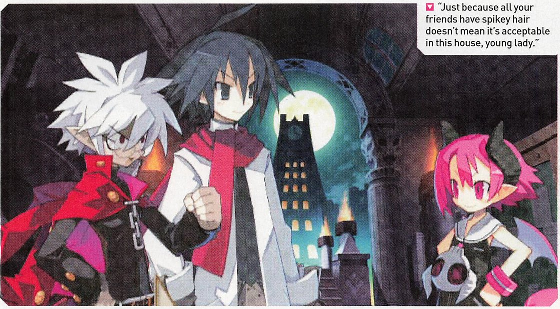
4 **Character Maxing**
Super Obsessive
Plowing all the way to Disgaea's ridiculous level cap with one or more key characters.

5 **All-Night Grinding**
Seek Help Now
Signs one through four interfere with school, work, and relationships.

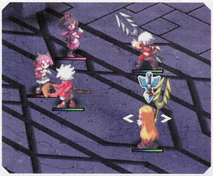


In *Disgaea's* Evil Academy, a good student is one that never shows up for class and doesn't do any homework.





"Just because all your friends have spikey hair doesn't mean it's acceptable in this house, young lady."



High school would have been so much easier if we all had status bars.

Still, there's about as much content here as could reasonably be wedged in the package, including all the downloadable extras from the PS3 game—new playable special characters, a whole new campaign starring one of them, plus a couple more Vita-only bonus characters and solo adventures just for extra-good measure.

For all its complexity and interlocking sub-systems, *Disgaea* has the right kind of pacing and structure for a handheld. We can play it for huge amounts of time, but any session with the game, short or long, usually breaks down neatly into bite-sized pieces. The battles themselves are the key—even the tougher chapter-ending bosses don't run to an unreasonable length, and some of the more puzzle-oriented stages can be over in a snap with the proper tactics.

Most gamers should be able to knock off a campaign battle, do some fiddling with skills and equipment, and take a trip to the Homeroom for a round of new character development in the space of a bus ride or a modest wait at the dentist's office. It helps that this version has several options to speed up elements like battle animations and text progression. There's a toggle to cut out almost every possible moment of wasted time.

Sensitivity Training

What flaws there are in the handheld conversion really come down to mastering some of the quirks in PS Vita's hardware design. The analog sticks are very sensitive, so it takes a while to develop an appropriately light touch for navigating the cursor in some of the more complex 3D levels. Likewise, working out how not to set off the rear touchpanel (which swings the camera angle up and down and changes the zoom distance) can be frustrating in the very early going.

Still, it has to be said that this isn't a diversion for a broad range of players. *Disgaea* was built for people who couldn't get enough out of ordinary strategy sims. In the hands of somebody who isn't committed to tearing the game systems wide open, it can feel awkward, tedious, and overly complicated. Not everybody has the right kind of kink in their brains to enjoy descending through the Item World for 10 or 15 levels at a go.

Which is fine. Nowhere is it written that every game on the market has to hook every single gamer. *Disgaea's* people know who they are, and they can rest assured that *Absence of Detention* is what they want. **DAVID F. SMITH**

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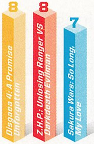
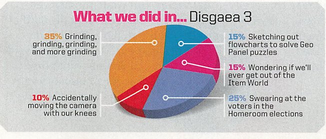


ScorePole
Nippon Ichi Software: strategy-RPG god to some, a devil to others.



We realize fighting for our survival can be challenging on occasion, but we cannot think of one good reason to be doing this. Not a one.

It's a bit more understandable after the apocalypse, but why is that we can never find a cab when we need one?

I Am Alive

An authentic survival game running low on fun rations

Info

Format PSN
Pub Ubisoft
Dev Ubisoft Shanghai
Price $14.99
ESRB Mature
It's like the character isn't the only one struggling to forge ahead.

Stop us when this starts to sound familiar: a dark, post-apocalyptic world ravaged by some vague catastrophe, left in a state of decay with one survivor trying to find his wife and daughter. The setup is hardly original, but what separates *I Am Alive* from similar games and movies is the genuine fragility of the hero. He really is fighting just to stay alive.

Take climbing, for example. In other third-person adventures, we clamber around for the right route, perhaps make a wrong leap, and have to backtrack. In *Assassin's Creed* or *Prince of Persia*, it's no big deal. Here, we have to constantly monitor our stamina with every jump. If we run out before reaching the end, we die of exertion. It means even the simplest environmental traversal is laced with tension.

It's just as unforgiving with retries. Most modern action games give us unlimited attempts from a forgiving, recent checkpoint. Not so here. On Normal mode, we get three retries per save point. Fail, and we're forced to restart the entire level. Naturally, bullets are rare too. In the first chapter, three enemies cornered us at once (two with knives, one with a pistol) and we had minimal health and one bullet. We lured one towards us by keeping the weapon holstered then hit him with a surprise machete slice before shooting the armed one and intimidating the other with the now-empty gun.

It all adds up to a game that feels right. This is how a struggle to survive in a harsh world should be: uncomfortable, tense, relentless. It's an excellent example of concept matched perfectly by game design.

It can feel exhausting though. We plodded about on the verge of death for an hour while the screen flashed red and shook the controller constantly before we found a health item in the wreckage since (big surprise) our health does not replenish when we use a retry. The game is at times merciless to the point of irritation. It's also ugly and made of environments that promise open expanse but feel like poorly disguised corridors.

I Am Alive is a near-perfect, gritty struggle to survive. It's tense, tough, and realistic (often to the point of frustration) with a strong story and an original approach to adventure gameplay. But while mostly well designed, it's never actually all that fun. You'll need grit and patience to enjoy this, so if you don't buy into the concept wholeheartedly, chances are you'll leave it to die before the end.

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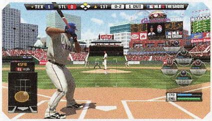
JAMES COATES

MLB 12 The Show

Format **PS Vita** Pub **SCEA** Dev **San Diego Studio** Price **$39.99, $34.99 (Download)** ESRB **Everyone**

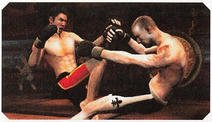


As portable depictions of the American Pastime go, there's never been a handheld baseball videogame better than *MLB 12: The Show.* Graphics and gameplay essentially mirror the PS3 experience, with the most noticeable detractions coming in presentation (pixelated crowds and no homerun celebrations) and the fussy (but optional) Vita-centric controls. Vita's uber-sensitive analog sticks did make pinpointing our pitches a challenge, but there's no denying the brilliance of *The Show's* superb pitcher/batter interface that turns each at bat into a pitch-predicting chess match. This portable rookie has some flaws, but there's all-star potential come next season. **ROGER BURCHILL**

PlayStation **8**

Supremacy MMA Unrestricted

Format **PS Vita** Pub **505 Games** Dev **Kung Fu Factory** Price **$39.99** ESRB **Mature**

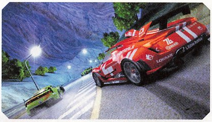


THQ's *UFC: Undisputed* games are notoriously complicated—an element that the bloody, brutal *Supremacy MMA: Unrestricted* addresses with more arcadey controls. Though it succeeds in streamlining and simplifying the basic mechanics, it fails in most every other area. The game's visuals are muddy, the controls unresponsive, the gameplay uninspired, and the load times are so long that Vita would often dip into Sleep mode as we waited for a match. Additional game modes include online multiplayer, short story-based campaigns, and Femme Fatales mode (which features just *two* women), but nothing can save *Unrestricted* from its self-induced knockout. **HOLLANDER COOPER**

PlayStation **4**

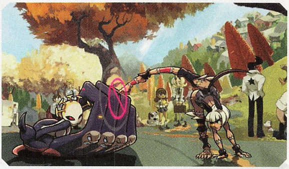
Ridge Racer

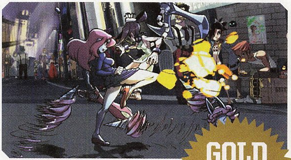
Format **PS Vita** Pub **Namco Bandai** Dev **Cellius** Price **$29.99, $24.99 (Download)** ESRB **Everyone 10+**



Ridge Racer Vita's gameplay will be familiar to franchise fans, but there's nothing horribly wrong with its drift-happy arcade-style racing. Yes, the cars aren't licensed and the tracks are few, but it performs decently and has some old-school racing charm. The problem here is the convoluted content and pricing structure: 30 bucks delivers a measly three tracks and five cars. DLC for five new cars, three new courses, and three new music tracks is included with the game for early adopters, but otherwise, additional courses and cars will be released later—for an additional cost. We called that adding insult to injury, even in the good ol' days. **ROGER BURCHILL**

PlayStation **5**





GOLD AWARD
PlayStation The Official Magazine

Skullgirls

Gripping girl fights

Info

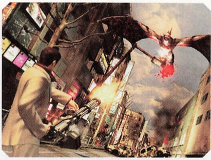
Format PSN
Pub Konami/ Autumn Games
Dev Reverge Labs
Price $14.99
ESRB Teen
It's like a Japanese-caliber fighting game that was developed in the U.S.

From the second we got our hands on *Skullgirls*, it was immediately apparent that the devs at Reverge Labs live and breathe fighting games. Their premiere PSN game strikes the perfect mix between accessibility and depth, resulting in a brawler that's skillfully crafted and easy on the eyes.

The combat takes place in the Canopy Kingdom, where Mafiosos, mad scientists, and members of royalty are all seeking the power of the ancient relic known as the Skull Heart. We can choose up to three of the game's eight lovely (or loathsome) ladies to fight on their behalf, with their power levels adjusted accordingly to balance lopsided battles. Each gal has their own unique shtick, and no two play alike: there's the absurdly busty ninja-like nurse Valentine, who chucks red crosses like shuriken, or the feline femme fatale Ms. Fortune who can pester opponents with her detachable head. Our personal favorite is Peacock, a genetically altered tyke whose murderous attacks are all animated cartoons reminiscent of Steamboat Willie.

Some may be stymied by the light roster, but the price is right, and a wealth of incoming DLC characters make this a non-issue. Consider a *Skullgirls* purchase as an investment to preserve the 2D fighting game genre. **LUCAS SULLIVAN**

PlayStation **9**



As with previous *Yakuza* games, the story is far superior to the action.

Yakuza Dead Souls

Brains, blood, and hostesses

Info

PS3
YAKUZA
DEAD SOULS
M
SEGA

Format PS3
Pub Sega
Dev Sega Japan
Price $59.99
ESRB Mature
It's like It's like the *Yakuza* we love but...deader.

The *Yakuza* series has always been a scattershot, overflowing with details and delights, bringing them to boil and hoping the best rise to the top. Authenticity and density have been the ethos in the four main games, and it's the same here. Besides the zombies, of course.

So, what *does* happen when zombies get involved? It's a question many fictional universes ask when they want to stir the pot (or when they run out of ideas), and *Dead Souls* takes a typically Yakuzian stab at answering it. It's a spinoff, sure, but not a total departure for the sometimes-absurd series.

We play as shady loan shark Shun Akiyama, besuited and scowly but actually quite a decent guy. Along with shady construction company owner Goro Majima, tough former yakuza Kazuma Kiryu, and the legendary Ryuji Goda, we must save the once bustling, now brain-hungry, hub of Kamurocho—but not without a few comedic moments and touching rapports.

Perhaps surprisingly, the whole "dead thing" is the worst part of *Dead Souls*. Its implementation is more than an afterthought, but the idea itself is a shamble in the wrong direction. Streets are wrecked and vacated, the vibrant charm of the world literally chewed up and spat out by hordes of brain-eaters. Linear sewers and concrete facilities are the worst of it. We often can't play minigames. We can't buy a burger. We can't explore at leisure. Isn't this where the series' very appeal lies for most westerners?

There are, thankfully, busy quarantine zones where people are slightly more alive, and tangles of streets offer attractions at every turn. That's the *Yakuza* we love: hundreds of NPC's loudly sharing snippets of conversations, billboards for movies, soft drinks, and tanning salons spanning the skyline, and so on. The open world is a mere playground compared to the Sahara-sized sandboxes of games like *Just Cause*, but *Dead Souls* makes up for it with a packed hub and many interiors. There's a haphazard range of gameplay possibilities—some meaningful and others completely not—but it's the same throughout.

Outside safe zones, there's more than one way to approach combat. We can run-and-gun or stand and pop off rounds with *Resident Evil*-style tank controls or use a slow and purposeful plod reminiscent of *Dead Space*. It's a brain-splattered pick-and-mix. And the mechanics keep on piling up. We can pick up bikes and posts to batter enemies. Chain enough headshots and we earn a Heat Snipe, which targets the most explosive thing in the area and, well, blows it up.

Occasionally an NPC joins us to follow commands and provide extra firepower, though the management is fiddly and, annoyingly, we lose progress if they die. We can even build up talents, bettering hand-to-hand skills and unlocking lock-ons. These RPG trappings also extend to shops—which can be invested in—and weapon crafting, which adds several layers to the otherwise-light combat.

Despite the game's tongue-in-cheek approach, combat's been done better elsewhere. There are fewer zombies than *Dead Island*, and fewer methods of dispatch than *Dead Rising* (though different enemies do bring variety, if a little shameless cribbing). It's not brilliant, but satisfying enough. Ultimately, the zombie sections are to be stomached while we wait for better bits to load.

JAMES COATES

Game On

Though harder to find, signature minigames do return. Why not partake in a spot of pachinko or play a round of surprisingly enjoyable darts? There's a batting cage to practice our baseball swing, and a totally unfair crane game where we can win plushies (it's rigged). Crucially, quick-time event karaoke and hostess bars return too.

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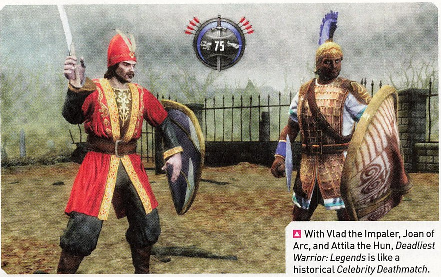

With Vlad the Impaler, Joan of Arc, and Attila the Hun, *Deadliest Warrior: Legends* is like a historical *Celebrity Deathmatch*.

Deadliest Warriors Ancient Combat

Spike's "What If" show becomes a fighting game...of sorts

Info

Format PS3 **Pub** 345 Games
Dev Pipeworks Software
Price $29.99 **ESRB** Mature
It's like a listless but historically astute *SoulCalibur.*

On the Spike TV show *Deadliest Warrior*, historians and military experts compare the fighting abilities of soldiers—both specific types (*Deadliest Warrior: The Game*) and specific people (*Deadliest Warrior: Legends*)—from different historical periods. So, naturally, they became a pair of downloadable arcade-style fighting games. Now both are available together in this collection, with some new arenas, all the DLC, and even episodes of the show added in for good measure.

For those looking for a serious fighting game, this ain't it. At best, *Ancient* is a low-rent brawler that pits such historical badasses as Roman Centurions against Shaolin Monks in a rather simplistic punch-out. While each combatant has their own unique and historically accurate weapons, this has none of the depth or combos any serious fight fan would require. Even the inclusion of a stamina meter is wasted, since most of the brawls don't last long enough to make anyone winded. But the worst part is that the controls are frustratingly sluggish, which makes this more like *Drunkiest Warrior*.

That said, for those looking to recreate the excitement of the show...this still ain't it. Sure, if the fantasy is to see Sun Tzu pwn Genghis Khan, this can make that happen. But no matter who steps into the arena—be it ninja, pirate, or the guy Mel Gibson played in *Braveheart*—the A.I. never seems to put up much of a fight. It also doesn't help that, instead of mixing them together, the two games are kept separate, dashing any hopes of seeing how Alexander the Great would do against a samurai. Things do get better when played couch-bound with a friend, but even then, it's just funnier rather than fun.

Ultimately, *Deadly Warrior* may not be deadly dull, but it's not terribly exciting, either. While serious fight fans won't even bother, even people who DVR the show will ultimately grow annoyed by the unresponsive controls and lack of challenge once the thrill of recreating the on-screen matchups fades away. **PAUL SEMEL**

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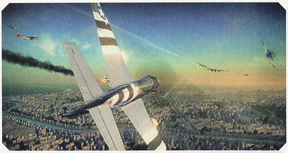

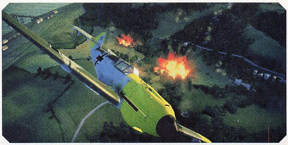

Birds of Steel

History takes flight

Info

Format PS3
Pub Konami
Dev Gaijin Entertainment
Price $39.99
ESRB Teen
It's like a sterile history lesson with some really great slides.

With such attention to detail on the rather dry subject matter of WWII's Pacific conflict, it's inevitable that *Birds of Steel* comes across a bit boring. But, like a romcom hot girl hidden behind her glasses, spend some time getting to know this studious plane Jane and we're rewarded with at least some inner beauty.

The two rather short campaigns depict the Pacific conflict from both American and Japanese perspectives. Stephen Fry-narrated montages set the scene before we're strapped into one of over 100 convincing planes flying in distinctly unconvincing environments. The machines have clearly been lovingly modeled, but at distance and above low-res landscapes, the effect is pretty underwhelming.

Normal and hard difficulty settings feel like full-on simulation, though in easy mode, we're free to be a bit more cavalier and concentrate on the dogfighting, dive-bombing, and torpedo runs. Sometimes it clicks: zipping around in a mess of flak smoke is engrossing, and the aim overlay fixes what's usually fiddly and imprecise in flight sims.

Woeful voice acting and poorly paced repetitive missions chuck a pigeon right in *Birds of Steel's* propeller though. There's longevity in the 16-player multiplayer, but the core dogfighting just isn't compelling enough. **JAMES COATES**

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Sumioni Demon Arts

Back to the drawing board

Info
Format PS Vita
Pub XSEED Games **Dev** Acquire
Price $19.99 (download only)
ESRB Everyone 10+
It's like more art than substance.

For a game with such an elegant art style, it's disappointing that the allure of *Sumioni: Demon Arts* melts away to a shriveled husk so early into this grinding platformer.

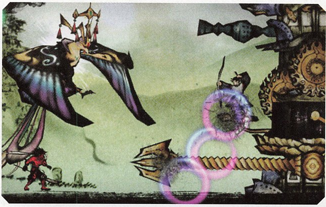
As an ink demon summoned to begrudgingly battle dark forces threatening Japan, the horned protagonist Agura's lackadaisical attitude is sadly mirrored throughout the game design itself. Carving through short side-scrolling stages full of swordsmen, archers, guard towers, and mighty boss encounters grows immediately repetitive, even with the neat touch-centric powers at our disposal.

The awesome ability to spend ink power to draw platforms, summon fire, and call forth godly companions is hampered by having to constantly rub the rear screen to replenish our supply, and bouncing between the Vita's buttons and touch elements becomes a miserable juggling act.

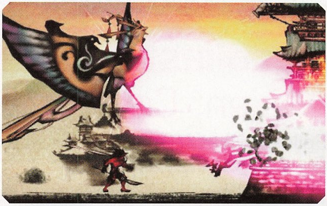
To top things off, *Sumioni's* campaign is a frustrating network of branching paths that artificially extends the dull campaign, yet the score-sensitive progression system for unlocking various endings is awkward at best. It demands a level of precision that's tough to pull off with the cumbersome control scheme, making it hard to muster the effort.

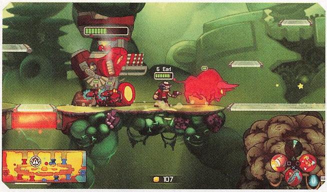
PlayStation The Official Magazine **5**

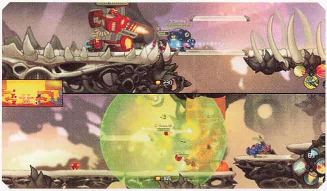
NATHAN MEUNIER



▲ Beauty is only skin deep in *Sumioni: Demon Arts* as the cool powers are hamstrung by overcomplicated controls.







◀ The maps in *Awesomenauts* will become familiar very quickly, but playing with a friend is always a good time.

Info
Format PSN
Pub dtp Ent.
Dev Ronimo Games
Price $9.99
ESRB Teen
It's like the "awesome" part of the name might be a tiny exaggeration.

Awesomenauts

To be or 'naut to be...

Set in 3587, *Awesomenauts* is a side-scrolling shooter about mercenaries hired to obtain a valuable metal known as Solar. We fight our way through enemy territory to get to the other team's Solar Drillcore and blow it up.

It's made very clear that *Awesomenauts* is meant to be a multiplayer experience. There is a single-player "Practice" mode but it only has three arenas to play in and two of them must be unlocked. The mode's purpose is strictly to unlock characters and help us level up outside of multiplayer.

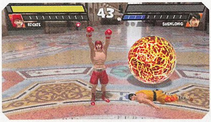
The drop-in/drop-out Battle mode allows us to either head into a session alone, or bring a couple friends with us—locally or by invite. We can also take part in private three-on-three matches. There are only three total maps, but all the unlockable upgrades and characters keep the game from becoming too stale, too quickly.

Though there is some environmental repetition, *Awesomenauts* is fun, addictive chaos at a decent price. ANNE LEWIS

PlayStation The Official Magazine **7**

Reality Fighters

Format **PS Vita** Pub **SCEA** Dev **Novarama** Price **$29.99** ESRB **Everyone 10+**

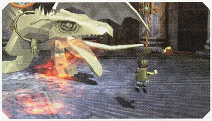


After seeing Wii ditch dreams of innovation in favor of party games, it's hard to convince anyone that new control methods are more than gimmickry. *Reality Fighters* doesn't even try. Instead, it takes a picture of our face and turns us into a beat-'em-up character who can then fight in augmented-reality environments such as our desk or toilet seat. Snap our face, choose an outfit, and use Vita's mic to record our battle cries. Finished? Well then, there's not much left to see because the "reality" part is much better (and more innovative) than the "fighter" part. With a flashy but limited move list, it's nothing more than a basic arcade scrapper. **JAMES COATES**

PlayStation **5**

LEGO Harry Potter Years 5-7

Format **PS Vita** Pub **Warner Bros. Interactive Ent.** Dev **Traveller's Tales** Price **$39.99** ESRB **Everyone**

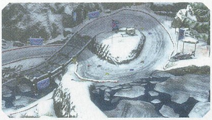


Harry and friends are back in *LEGO Harry Potter: Years 5-7*, but despite the familiar puzzles and environments, parts of the game felt hollow. A lack of narrative will ensure players who haven't read the books or seen the movies will have no idea what's happening. Missing multiplayer makes the experience feel stunted and takes away one of the series' biggest strengths. The story is easily beaten in eight hours and though the gameplay itself is clean, the cutscenes are a blurry, ugly mess. Touchscreen controls felt pointless and forced and we almost exclusively used the buttons and analog sticks to control the game. This is easily the weakest link in the *LEGO* chain. **ANNE LEWIS**

PlayStation **6**

MotorStorm RC

Format **PS Vita** Pub **SCEA** Dev **Evolution Studios** Price **$9.99 (download)** ESRB **Everyone**



The switch to radio-controlled cars and an isometric view utterly divorces this game from the series' trademark sense of hectic competition. Gone is the madcap scramble along precarious drops, through thick undergrowth, and over other racers. Festival mode homages the last four games—with 16 tracks from Monument Valley, an island paradise, and Arctic wastes—but the courses are micro-scaled and devoid of moving parts and triggered events, which were always the bread and butter of the main games. Yes, there's a decent sense of speed, but cheaper, better racers reside in the PlayStation Store. All this offers is twin-stick controls and slightly crisper visuals. **JAMES COATES**

PlayStation **5**

DLC Roundup

Mass Effect 3
From Ashes

Price **$9.99** ESRB **Mature**

A rescue mission to recover and recruit the sole survivor of a once-extinct race yields a new Prothean squadmate in this DLC. But he's more than just an extra gun-wielder for our posse, the story interactions that accompany him add interesting flavor to the Normandy's crew.

DC Universe Online
The Battle for Earth

Price **$9.99** ESRB **Teen**

The war against Brainiac reaches its epic crescendo in this DLC that sends us battling the supervillian and his minions across Gotham City, Wonder Woman's Themyscira stomping grounds, and beyond. A new earth power set, extra raids, and additional missions add some oomph.

Download of the Month

RECKONING
THE LEGEND OF DEAD KEL

Kingdoms of Amalur: Reckoning
The Legend of Dead Kel

Price $9.99 **ESRB** Mature

The quest to destroy Gallows End's undead pirate hordes proves to be worth the fuss as pillaging powerful new weapons from the island's rotting baddies is only one of the power-boosting opportunities in this expansion. Building out the island's keep with an armory, a stable, and other upgrades grants even more killer perks.

Battle Royale
The Complete Collection

Finally released and halfway worth the wait

Info

BR
BATTLE ROYALE: THE COMPLETE COLLECTION

Price $49.99
Creators Kinji Fukasaku, Kenta Fukasaku, Koushun Takami
Starring Tatsuya Fujiwara, Beat Takeshi, Aki Maeda, Taro Yamamoto
Rated Not Rated
Extras Deleted scenes, making-of featurettes, press materials, audition footage, documentary.

Originally released in 2000 and considered a cult classic among Japanese movie fans and gore hounds, Kinji Fukasaku's *Battle Royale* is a harsh story about middle schoolers forced to fight each other to the death.

Royale is, in essence, a horror movie that hinges on the inherent dark nature of humanity. There's a lot more going on here, however, beyond the gratuitous kid-focused mayhem. The movie ups the ante of its horrible violence by giving most characters an amazing amount of dimension. The harsh dynamics of teenage social structures—be it friendship, love, cliques, or animosity—are explored throughout the film, before and during the tragic events of the battle.

It's *Royale's* character and story depth that make it more than a simple exploitation flick. The literary roots of the script are in full force, and even the more unlikeable kids are shown in an understanding and sympathetic light—especially in the included director's cut.

In the end, this is still an unsettling movie about kids brutally killing other kids—a mix of *The Most Dangerous Game* and *Lord of the Flies*. The excellent cinematography doesn't shy away from blow-by-brutal-blow depictions of the violence, but the overall direction treats the content respectfully.

Battle Royale II: Requiem, in contrast, is cartoonish in its execution and remarkably bad. Twisting the story focus to a weird sort of anti-American/terrorist diatribe, *Requiem* is largely a mess. The camera work—which attempts to replicate war movies at times—is shaky and amateurish. Worse, the dialogue and plot are terrible. Characters launch into preachy speeches and the violence receives a more gimmicky treatment. It's not unwatchable, just vastly inferior to the original.

The book-like Complete Collection comes with both the theatrical and director's cut of the original film, the theatrical cut of the sequel, and a DVD packed with film shorts and other fan-pleasing goodies. It's a letdown that the extras aren't in high definition though. All the same, we've waited a long time for this release, and Anchor Bay's excellent-quality transfers don't disappoint. **JASON D'APRILE**

PlayStation The Official Magazine
7

Yakuza Weapon

Absurd, crazy, bloody fun

By now, it's almost expected that most Japanese action movies (especially those with manga roots) are crazy and over the top. *Yakuza Weapon* certainly doesn't dispel the stereotype. Opening with what is essentially a *Rambo*-like parody to introduce its main character, Shozo (and making sure any notions of realism or logic are immediately thrown out the window), *Weapon* is a smorgasbord of blood and fun.

Crazy action scenes that consistently one-up each other are the norm by the time the movie gets around to cybernetically enhancing its insane anti-hero with a minigun arm and rocket-shooting leg. The movie manages to continue upping the crazy factor with Shozo battling an assassin wielding his dead, naked, weaponized sister. Kudos to the filmmakers for even knowing where to go after that.

To add to the overall weirdness, the movie throws in near inappropriate bits of dramatic flashbacks, extreme bits of bromance, goofy sidekicks, and a very aggressive girlfriend. *Weapon* doesn't seem too concerned or interested in making sense (and it doesn't), the movie simply goes along on its crazy ride, throwing in armed phallic prosthetics, nuke-armed corpses, and some truly bizarre villains.

All of this insanity is accompanied by the expected blood-gushing violence that remains true to its manga roots—the action here is remarkably creative. Despite the film's distinctly low-budget air, the direction is tight and adeptly presents each new scene in a slightly different and unexpected way. Shozo, in particular, isn't likeable, but he's certainly watchable.

Distributor Well Go didn't include a ton of extras here. The captioning for the Japanese dialogue is frequently spotty, though the overall quality of the disc is solid. There are some behind-the-scenes extras, deleted scenes, and a spinoff short about Shozo's ever faithful, yet dumb lackeys that's played for laughs.

For those seeking—or are already into—the inspired oddity of Japanese cinema, *Yakuza Weapon* is definitely an entertaining diversion. JD

PlayStation The Official Magazine 7

BLU-RAY + DVD
YAKUZA WEAPON

Info

Price $29.98 **Creators** Tak Sakaguchi, Yudai Yamaguchi
Starring Takashi Nishina, Akihiko Sai, Arata Yamanaka
Rated Not Rated
Extras Deleted scenes, spinoff short, trailers.

Blu-ray Roundup

The Woman in Black

Price $35.99 **Rated** R

The classic Hammer Films name returns with style thanks to this beautifully shot, moody ghost story. *Harry Potter*-alumni, Daniel Radcliffe, is terrific as a protagonist whose deep depression proves to be the perfect foil to a vengeful, child-killing ghost in 19th century England. While the ending is a bit suspect, this is an otherwise superbly made horror flick. 8

The Sitter

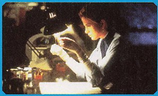
Price $39.99 **Rated** R / NR

If it weren't for his role in *Moneyball,* we'd completely write off Jonah Hill after this awful, by-the-numbers comedic failure. Nearly devoid of laughs and at times uncomfortably bad, Hill seems content to float through playing an older version of his *Superbad* persona. The result is painful to watch. 4

The Killing

Price $49.99 **Rated** TV-MA

AMC's newest addition to their fine stable of shows is a dark, moody, and slow-paced cop procedural. The entire season focuses on solving the murder of one teenage girl, and each show leads viewers into a new area of possible red herrings. The pacing is ponderous at times, but the performances are superb. 7



Mimic: The Director's Cut

Price $29.98 **Rated** R

Guillermo Del Toro's second film might seem like a throw-away B-movie about giant killer cockroaches, but it's a damn good one. Almost two decades after its initial release, *Mimic* remains a stylish and entertaining film. 7

Want that

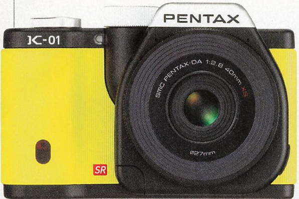
Lust-have stuff for PlayStation people

AIAIAI Capital Headphones

These sturdy, foldable, and flexible headphones are built for the elements. A reinforced fiberglass housing provides increased durability, and a lightweight rubber brace allows for listening comfort and a secure fit.

$150

aiaiai.dk



Pentax K-01

Pentax's latest is the only mirrorless interchangeable lens camera to support a full DSLR lens lineup. Gorgeously designed by noted industrial designer Marc Newson, it's a great choice for novice or expert photographers.

$750

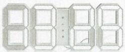
pentax.com

White & White Clock

Conceived by Russian designer Vadim Kibardin, this LED clock is a 3D interpretation of the LED classic. It includes time, date and alarm functionality, and even an ambient light sensor that dims the digits in darkness.

$200

kibardindesign.com

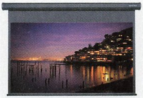


Monoprice Motorized Projection Screen

Gaming on a projector can be a hassle. Minimize that: this 106-inch motorized screen can be mounted on wall or ceiling, and the quality four-layer matte screen means you won't miss a pixel.

$389

monoprice.com



Doxie Go Scanner

A lightweight, battery-powered scanner with on-board storage, the Doxie Go effortlessly turns magazine articles, business cards, and any other printed matter into digital form. The 600 dpi scans are complete and uploaded to your device in less than 10 seconds.

$200

getdoxie.com

GREEN GROCERY
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LEGO R2-D2 Kit

This is the LEGO R2-D2 kit you've been looking for. This 2100-piece monstrosity is over a foot tall and even includes R2's signature retractable third leg, pop-out computer interface, and chest-mounted circular saw blade.

$180

lego.com

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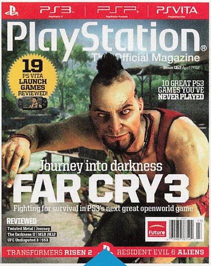
WORLD EXPO

mail@ptom

The sights, sounds, and...smells of gaming assault our senses in this month's mail

Email us at PTOM_letters@futureus.com or write to PTOM, Future US, 4000 Shoreline Court, Suite 400, South San Francisco, CA 94080. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.



You can't tell here, but he's actually just pointing at the birthday cake he baked for us. What a nice guy!

How The Story Goes

As a Pixy Stix-fueled eight to 11-year-old, all games were amazing. As I got older, I saw no games with solid and interesting storylines like PS2 games had (best system of all time), especially for RPGs. The PS2 ate, slept, and breathed good-quality RPGs, which PS3 is choking up on. I'm not saying the games developers dish out are awful, only lacking story depth, character intrigue, and a different experience. FPS worshippers -_-

A.J. GILBERT ROCHESTER, NY

Don't worry, A.J., FPS gamers aren't any happier...

Killzone 2's campaign was epic, thrilling, and downright badass. *Killzone 3* was fun, but it was obvious that either not as much time went into it or just not enough thought. It did have many improvements, but Guerrilla is capable of making a better campaign. It's not just *Killzone*, either. It's very noticeable in many franchises: *Call of Duty, Battlefield,* even *Uncharted* has a hint of this happening. So many franchises once had lengthy campaigns and took more then a day to complete. I understand that more and more people want to play games with other people, but...what's happened to the story?

JOSH THE INTERNET

What happened to story? Well, a few things, but probably the biggest is online multiplayer. Connectivity and social gaming have become huge focuses for developers not only because there's an obvious demand for them but because they extend the life of an experience and help encourage gamers to hang on to their games rather than sell them on the used market. Still, it's clear (to us, at least) that many gamers still long for deep, engaging storylines. The undeniable success of the heavily story-driven Mass Effect *franchise proves this as well. Hopefully as devs start to realize this, the pendulum will swing back toward story and land somewhere comfortably in the middle.*

Do It Yourself

My brother and I have an interesting idea for a game, and I was wondering how to get our idea out there. I didn't know who to contact with the idea, so I figured my favorite PlayStation magazine would know who to talk to.

CORY THE INTERNET

Honestly, your best bet is to make the game yourself. Seriously. Unsolicited ideas are rarely (if ever) picked up by publishers regardless of how totally awesome they are. So why not just take control and make it yourself? Find a programming class at your local community college or just download a free set of development tools off the net and become a self-taught design master. It won't be easy, but if you're

Smells Good, Man

I have been a subscriber since '06 or '07. I can't remember, but a while. Ever since I got the first issue in my mailbox, your magazine smells great. Always smelled great. But the last issue with the nice glossy cover is the best-smelling magazine I've noticed in a long time. Thanks for everything. **BRYAN** VIA SNAIL MAIL

Just wait until you see...er, smell our scratch-and-sniff issue. Cherry, licorice, Solid Snake...

We welcome reader photos, letters, and stories ("Submissions"), however, we cannot promise to publish any Submission and none will be returned. Neither PlayStation: The Official Magazine ("PTOM") nor Future US, Inc. shall be liable for loss or damage to any Submission. By sending in your Submissions to PTOM you represent and warrant that you own or otherwise have all necessary rights to the Submissions to allow us to publish them in PTOM and as follows. You grant PTOM a worldwide, royalty-free, perpetual, irrevocable, non-exclusive right and fully sub-licensable license to use, copy, distribute, publish, modify, adapt, translate, and store, your Submissions, in any form, format, or medium, of any kind now known or later developed and to use your name, likeness, and any other information in connection with the use of the Submission you provide.

passionate enough, your hard work can yield real, tangible results.

The Ultimate Showdown

There are plenty of games surrounding robot apocalypses and plenty more with zombie apocalypses. Question: Are there any with both? Basically my idea (or vision) is robots vs. zombies vs. humans. Even better, mixed factions for a human/robot class (like *Deus Ex*) and for a zombie/human class (like *Resident Evil*). Story: Some people think humans created robots, and when the robots took over, humans then created "muscle/sense amplifiers" to fight robots, but zombies took over as a result. Some people believe that it was the other way around that caused the end. Do you think this would make a good game, and who do you think could pull it off?

CHRIS THE INTERNET

SHUT UP AND TAKE OUR MONEY NOW! Also, maybe Naughty Dog? Or you could just team up with Cory and his brother. An indie studio is born!

What Are Friends For?

I have a major problem. I want a PS Vita, but I can't afford it because I only have $200. What can I do to get a PS Vita but not waste 50 to 100 extra dollars on a system when I could get a game and a memory card for that same amount?

AUSTIN SEIBERT GEORGIA

Your best bet: wait for a price drop. It will probably take a few months, maybe even a year, but inevitably the price will go down. If you can't wait that long, just trick a friend into selling you his Vita for $200. Tell him it makes him look fat.

Ask Scott

Q I just purchased a 3D TV recently and was told by the person I bought it from that only PS3 Slims have 3D capabilities. I tried "searching the 'net," as I like to call it, to see if my PS3 fat was able to do so in any way. Finding no real answer, I figured I would ask the pros.

TIM W. THE INTERNET

A The PS3's 3D capabilities were actually implemented through a firmware update back in 2009, and since all PS3 models use the same firmware... Just make sure you have both a game and TV that support 3D as well. You need all three ingredients to add that third dimension.

Sub Standard

In the Letters section of your March issue (issue 56), you answered a question about someone finding something on the cover and you said it was only on subscriber's magazines. I can't get a subscription because I live in Canada, so I wanted to know, are there any other differences that we don't know about?

BRANDON CANADA

Yes, the subscriber edition glows in the dark, smells like bacon, and comes with a free Corgi. Also, none of that is true. So, no.

You Sure It's Anne?

So in the mail section of the April 2012 issue (issue 57), the letter "Honor Guard" has no response. Was this intentional or is Anne feeling lazy now that she's not just an intern anymore?

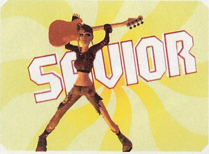
JEREMY THE INTERNET

Sometimes we don't have anything to add to a reader's letter, but we still feel it's worth sharing, whether it's poignant, funny, or just plain bizarre. So instead of chiming in, we just let the letter speak for itself.

DLC Done Right

Great article on "Best and Worst DLC" (issue 57). I agree that DLC has been used, in some instances, to help sell a game but then turns out to be disappointing. Even worse, in recent months we have seen pre-order DLC codes not work. However, let's not forget the really *great* DLC some games have offered. *Rock Band* continues to churn out weekly DLC without fail (not to mention the Rock Band Network songs as well). Criterion also gave us an incredible amount of DLC for *Burnout Paradise*. When done well, DLC can take games much further than the original purchase.

JOE KULIKOWSKI THE INTERNET



Et Cetera

All the other stuff that distracts PTOM

Battlestar Galactica: Blood & Chrome

"A glorious trailer gave us a tantalizing peek at the *BSG* prequel, but then Syfy decided against proceeding with the project. *WTF?* Are they mad? Are they afraid that people might start watching their channel again?!"

ROGER BURCHILL

JOYCE MANOR
OF ALL THINGS I WILL SOON GROW TIRED

Of All Things I Will Soon Grow Tired

"At barely 13 minutes long, Joyce Manor's follow-up to last year's self-titled debut album is short but incredibly rich. No hook is repeated, no melody reused. It's pitch-perfect guitar pop."

SCOTT BUTTERWORTH

Taco Bell Doritos Locos Tacos

"Ryan, or the Macho Nacho as we called him, has moved on to new editorial adventures. But his spirit lives on in Taco Bell's most brilliant creation evar. A taco shell made out of Doritos? Someone deserves a Nobel Prize."

ADIOS, AMIGO

LicketyCut
www.LicketyCut.com
N7

LicketyCut

"I am a nerd. I am also a girl. Sometimes I want these facets to mix. LicketyCut makes geek-chic jewelry I don't feel embarassed to wear. Want a *Mass Effect* N7 necklace? They make it. *Portal* earrings? They have those too."

ANNE LEWIS

"A FUN RIDE."
—IGN

GEOFF JOHNS JIM LEE

JUSTICE LEAGUE

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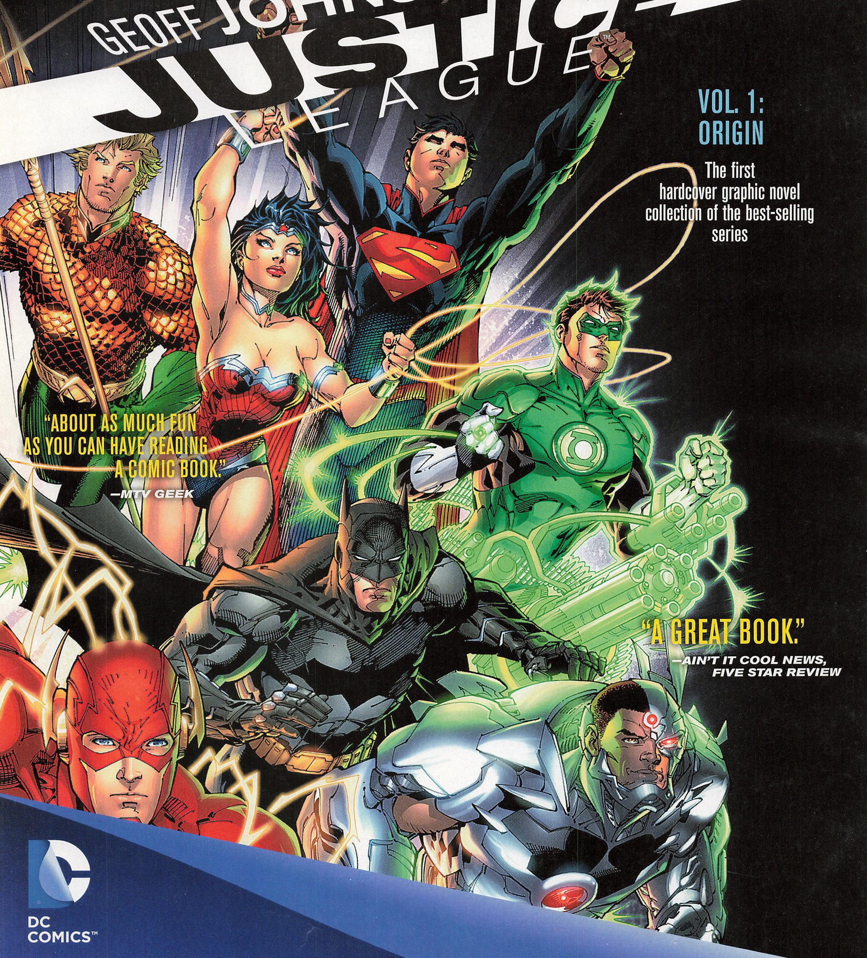
The first hardcover graphic novel collection of the best-selling series



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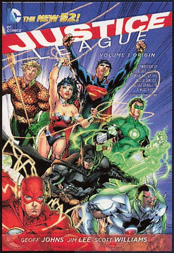
—MTV GEEK

"A GREAT BOOK."
—AIN'T IT COOL NEWS, FIVE STAR REVIEW

DC COMICS™

THE NEW 52!

MAY 2012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DC COMICS–**THE NEW 52!**

GRAPHIC NOVELS RELEASE SCHEDULE

MAY

- Animal Man Vol 1: The Hunt
- Batman Vol 1: The Court of Owls
- Catwoman Vol 1: The Game
- Green Arrow Vol 1: The Midas Touch
- Green Lantern Vol 1: Sinestro
- Justice League International Vol 1: The Signal Masters
- Justice League Vol 1: Origin
- Stormwatch Vol 1: The Dark Side
- Wonder Woman Vol 1: Blood

JUNE

- Batman: Detective Comics Vol 1: Faces of Death
- Batwoman Vol 1: Hydrology
- Frankenstein Agent of S.H.A.D.E. Vol 1: War of The Monsters
- Legion of Super-Heroes Vol 1: Hostile World
- Mister Terrific Vol 1: Mind Games
- Red Lanterns Vol 1: Blood and Rage
- Static Shock Vol 1: Supercharged

JULY

- Batgirl Vol 1: The Darkest Reflection
- Batwing Vol 1: The Lost Kingdom
- Batman and Robin Vol 1: Born to Kill
- Demon Knights Vol 1: Seven Against the Dark
- Grifter Vol 1: Most Wanted
- Men of War Vol 1: Uneasy Company
- Suicide Squad Vol 1: Kicked in the Teeth

AUGUST

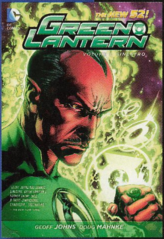
- Deathstroke Vol 1: Legacy
- Hawk and Dove Vol 1: First Strikes
- O.M.A.C. Vol 1: Omactivate!
- Resurrection Man Vol 1: Dead Again
- Superman: Action Comics Vol 1: Superman and The Men of Steel
- Superboy Vol 1: Incubation
- Swamp Thing Vol 1: Raise Them Bones

SEPTEMBER

- Aquaman Vol 1: The Trench
- Birds of Prey Vol 1: Trouble in Mind
- The Fury of Firestorm: The Nuclear Men Vol 1: God Particle
- Green Lantern Corps Vol 1: Fearsome
- Legion Lost Vol 1: Run from Tomorrow
- Teen Titans Vol 1: It's Our Right to Fight
- Voodoo Vol 1: What Lies Beneath

OCTOBER

- All-Star Western Vol 1: Guns and Gotham
- Batman: The Dark Knight Vol 1: Knight Terrors
- Green Lantern: New Guardians Vol 1: The Ring Bearer
- I, Vampire Vol 1: Tainted Love
- Justice League Dark Vol 1: In the Dark
- Nightwing Vol 1: Traps and Trapezes
- The Savage Hawkman Vol 1: Darkness Rising
- Supergirl Vol 1: The Last Daughter of Krypton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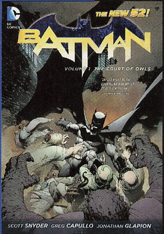
GREEN LANTERN
VOLUME 1 SINESTRO
GEOFF JOHNS DOUG MAHNKE

NOVEMBER

- Blackhawks Vol 1: The Great Leap Forward
- Blue Beetle Vol 1: Metamorphosis
- Captain Atom Vol 1: Evolution
- DC Universe Presents Vol 1 Featuring Deadman & Challengers of the Unknown
- The Flash Vol 1: Move Forward
- Red Hood and The Outlaws Vol 1: Redemption
- Superman Vol 1: What Price Tomorrow?


THE NEW 52!
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BATMAN
VOLUME 1 THE COURT OF OWLS
SCOTT SNYDER GREG CAPULLO JONATHAN GLAPION

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PSN
Best Games

It's the best of the best! Get the lowdown on this month's PSN goodies no one should live without.

BEST FULL GAMES

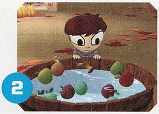
1

Creepy Crawly Platformer

Limbo

Limbo may have taken its time coming to PSN, but it was worth the wait. The game melds simple controls with supremely challenging gameplay and a beautiful, but chilling, aesthetic. It's the rare game where we die often but never feel frustrated about it.

10 Pub **Playdead**
Dev **Playdead**



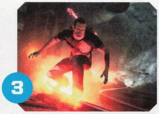
2

Tricks and Treats

Costume Quest

Sure, it's Halloween themed, but the adventure itself is timeless. With candy and monster-smiting in equal measure, this sugary delight is a charming homage to *Final Fantasy X-2*, enhanced by Tim Schafer's humor.

9 Pub **THQ**
Dev **Double Fine**



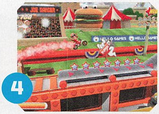
3

Frightening Lightning

inFamous Festival of Blood

This standalone spinoff sees *inFamous* hero Cole MacGrath facing off against vampires. At stake? (groan) Cole's very own soul. It's enough to make vampires fashionably cool again—in spite of *Twilight*.

9 Pub **SCEA**
Dev **Sucker Punch**



4

Platforming Puzzle Racer

Joe Danger

A mix of *Excitebike*-style racing and insane stunt-driven platforming action, this vibrant indie gem shines brightly among the best PSN offerings available. Getting wild and dangerous has never been this awesome.

9 Pub **Hello Games**
Dev **Hello Games**

5

Zen Exploration

Flower

This gorgeous concept game makes blowing hordes of fluttering petals around a lush natural environment into an unforgettable experience that holds up against the biggest triple-A offerings. Don't pass this one up.

9 Pub **SCEA**
Dev **thatgamecompany**

6

Puzzle Shooter

PixelJunk Shooter

Featuring alien and rock blasting galore, the fourth entry in the *PixelJunk* series is easily the best. Saving trapped mining colonists with a versatile, environmental puzzle-solving ship is a creative and challenging affair that taxes both our mind and our reflexes.

9 Pub **SCEA**
Dev **Q-Games**

7

Role-playing Puzzler

Might & Magic Clash of Heroes

Don't overlook *Heroes* with its throwback 2D visuals and turn-based battle system—the RPG-flavored puzzle action requires stacking creatures for attacks and building walls for defense. It may look and play old school, but it's still mighty fun and magically challenging.

9 Pub **Ubisoft**
Dev **Capybara Games**

52701
21
21700

8

Hardcore Brawler

Street Fighter III Third Strike Online

This perfect port of the legendary 1999 arcade game features all-new netcode that virtually eliminates lag. *Third Strike's* deep, demanding mechanics have earned it a diehard following. It deserves to be rediscovered and celebrated.

9 Pub **Capcom**
Dev **Capcom/Iron Galaxy**

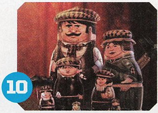
9

We Are Not Alone

Journey

The hauntingly beautiful and atmospheric *Journey* has us wandering a desert to reach a distant mountain. Along the way, we may or may not encounter and wordlessly communicate with fellow travelers who can aid us in our quest. Is this a game, or a metaphor for life?

8 Pub **SCEA**
Dev **thatgamecompany**



10

Dolled-Up Adventure

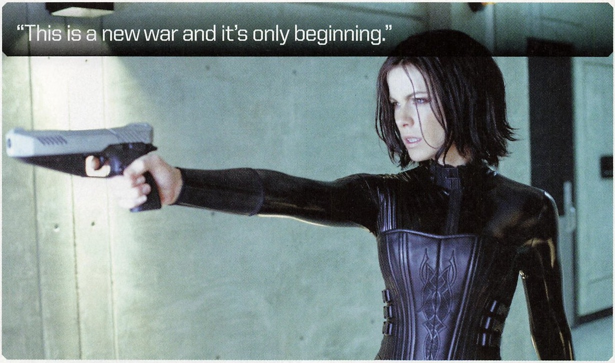
Stacking

Double Fine games come chock full of personality and charm. Using matryoshka dolls to solve puzzles and explore a '30s Depression-era–esque world of miniature mannequins may not seem all that compelling, but it is. This is a fine argument for Double Fine to make more PSN titles.

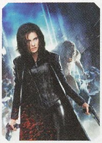
8 Pub **THQ**
Dev **Double Fine**

PSN Video Delivery Service Spotlight

What we're downloading to our PS3 this month



"This is a new war and it's only beginning."



Underworld: Awakening

ETA **May 8** Rated **R** Genre **Action/Fantasy Horror** Studio **Screen Gems**

We all know real vampires aren't sparkly, broody dudes. No, they are in fact wickedly sexy ladies clad in tight, tight leather. Selene—the aforementioned fanged fox—is back to lead an army of Vampires and their former enemies, the Lycans, against the humans who now seek to eradicate them. With their numbers sharply dwindling, how long can Selene and the rest of her kind hold out against humankind? War never changes, except when it's waged by the paranormal.

Top VDS Downloads

Movies

Immortals
The Sitter (Unrated)
Jack and Jill
The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo (2011)
Puss in Boots

TV Shows

The Walking Dead: Season 2
Game of Thrones: Season 1
Breaking Bad: Season 4
Sons of Anarchy: Season 4
Supernatural: Season 7

BEST FREE STUFF

1

Dead Gear

Army Corps of Hell
Frog and Pumpkin Equipment Sets

Decking out our minions grants them handy battle perks. Pumpkins give goblins protection from flames, while frog heads ward off thunder.

Pub **Square Enix**
Dev **Entersphere**

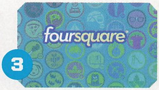
2

Slameo Cameos

SF X Tekken
Mega Man and Pac-Man

Inject additional weirdness into *SFXT's* arcade-style combat with a playable Mega Man character and Pac-Man riding a giant mecha-thing.

Pub **Capcom**
Dev **Capcom**



3

Check, Please

Foursquare
Vita App

Vita's Foursquare app lets us stay abreast of where our pals are hanging out while we keep them posted on our location. It's a handy way to connect when gaming on the go.

Pub **SCEA**
Dev **Foursquare Labs**

4

Modern Art

Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 3
Elite Theme

Sometimes minimalism can speak volumes. This freebie MW3 Elite theme may be to the point, but it commemorates our assault rifle skills.

Pub **Activision**
Dev **Infinity Ward**

5

Get Floored

Elevator Action Deluxe
Addtl. Stages 2

Testing our superspy skills with five all-new stages of elevator craziness is a blast. It's a great way to extend the up-and-down fun.

Pub **Taito**
Dev **Taito/Sync**

Spiders

Weaving a deadly web with PlayStation's eight-legged freaks

Various men of white-coated science say Earth would be overrun with blue bottles and other buzzing pests if it wasn't for the humble spider. Personally, we'd rather take an eternity of futile fly-swatting than live in a world where we constantly dread checking our kitchen sink for hairy visitors. Unfortunately, in the wicked web of PlayStation it takes more than a rolled-up newspaper to annihilate the average arachnid. Hell, most of the house-sized beasties below need either copious sword-stabs to the face to down, or...well, a mega-guitar solo. Of course, if we need help with these terrifying digital tarantulas, we could also give our friendly neighborhood webslinger a bell.

Spider-Man

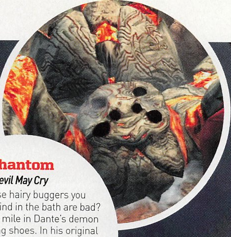
Various games

From the recent *Edge of Time* to his movie spinoffs, Spidey has been slinging between virtual skyscrapers since PSone. Young, occasionally dumb and full of sticky webbing, Peter Parker's superhero alter ego is a sucker for a pretty redhead. Sadly, his recent games have lost their spider senses by chucking in alternate realities.

Giant Frostbite Spider

The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim

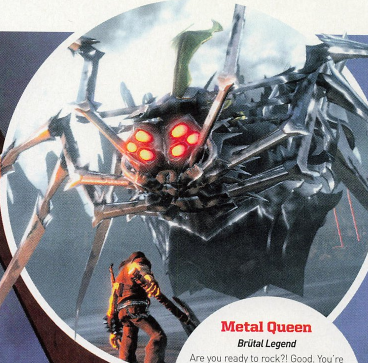
The incy wincy spi... Uh, the massive fantasy tarantula crawled up the water spout. Down came the rain and he ate the contents of our Dragonborn's stomach out. Our twisted nursery rhymes aside, *Skyrim's* web-spinners love to melt adventurers' faces with their venom. Weirdly, they also often share lairs with vampires. Now there's an odd couple.



Phantom

Devil May Cry

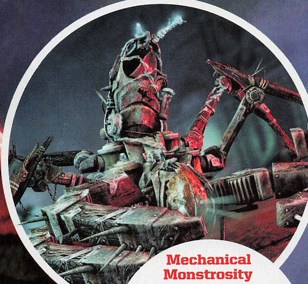
Think those hairy buggers you occasionally find in the bath are bad? Try walking a mile in Dante's demon curb-stomping shoes. In his original PS2 adventure, the son of Sparda has to square off against a demon spider the size of several SUVs. In an unfair move, Phantom rocks both a scorpion-style tail o'death and molten lava blood. Cheater.



Metal Queen

Brütal Legend

Are you ready to rock?! Good. You're free to enter into a mega-moshpit with Jack Black's guitarist...as soon as you slay a metallic beastie that makes *Lord of the Rings'* Shelob look like a money spider. The Metal Queen has swarms of titanium bugs at her disposal. Oh, and she also likes to lay eggs in eye sockets. Quaint.



Mechanical Monstrosity

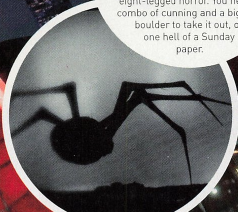
Castlevania: Lords of Shadow

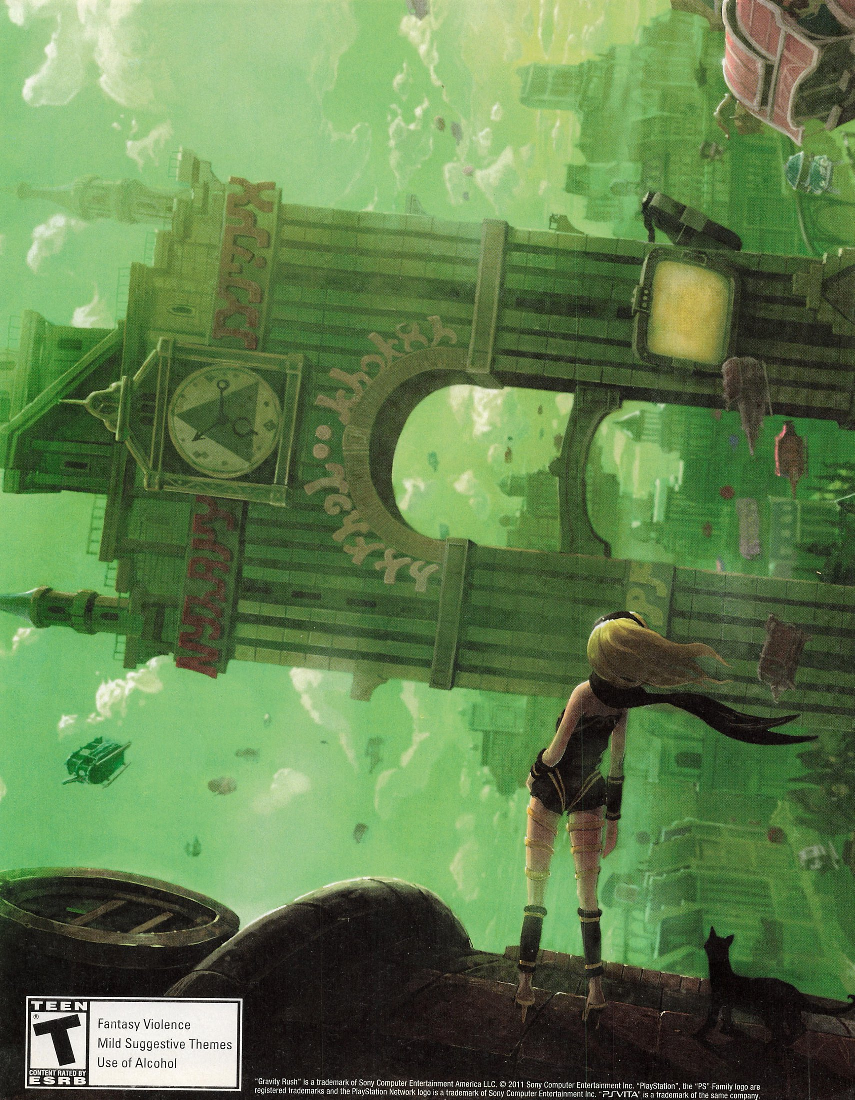
Y'know those giant spiders you can ride like venomous, fugly horses in *Lords of Shadow*? They're adorable next to this Frankenstein-built nightmare with which Gabriel has a great thumping scrap. The developers based its design on the whip spider. Trust us, don't Google it if you're arachnophobic.

Tree Spider

Limbo

Being stuck between heaven and hell, where death stalks every complicated physics puzzle, must really suck. Although if we were *Limbo's* silhouetted tyke, we'd rather be impaled on spikes than face this eight-legged horror. You need a combo of cunning and a big-ass boulder to take it out, or one hell of a Sunday paper.





TEEN

T

CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Fantasy Violence
Mild Suggestive Themes
Use of Alcohol

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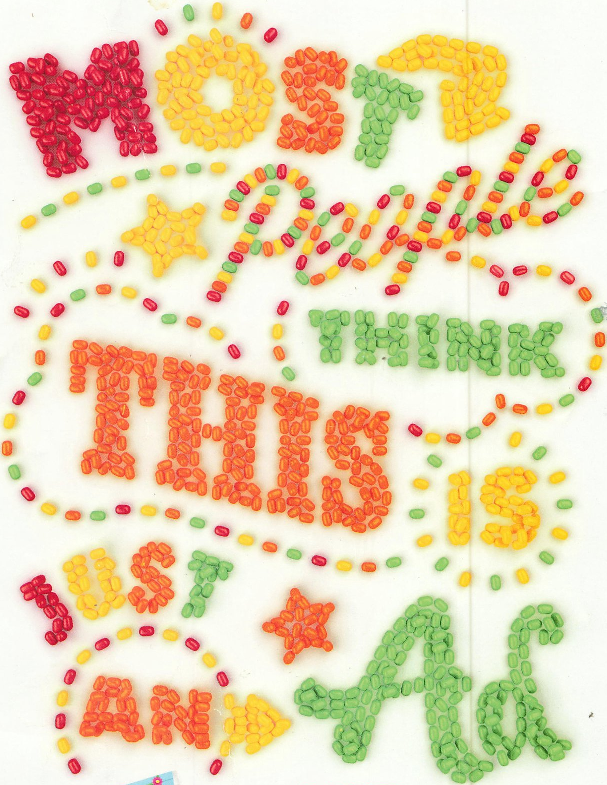
MOST
People
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Ad

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tic tac
fruit adventure

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